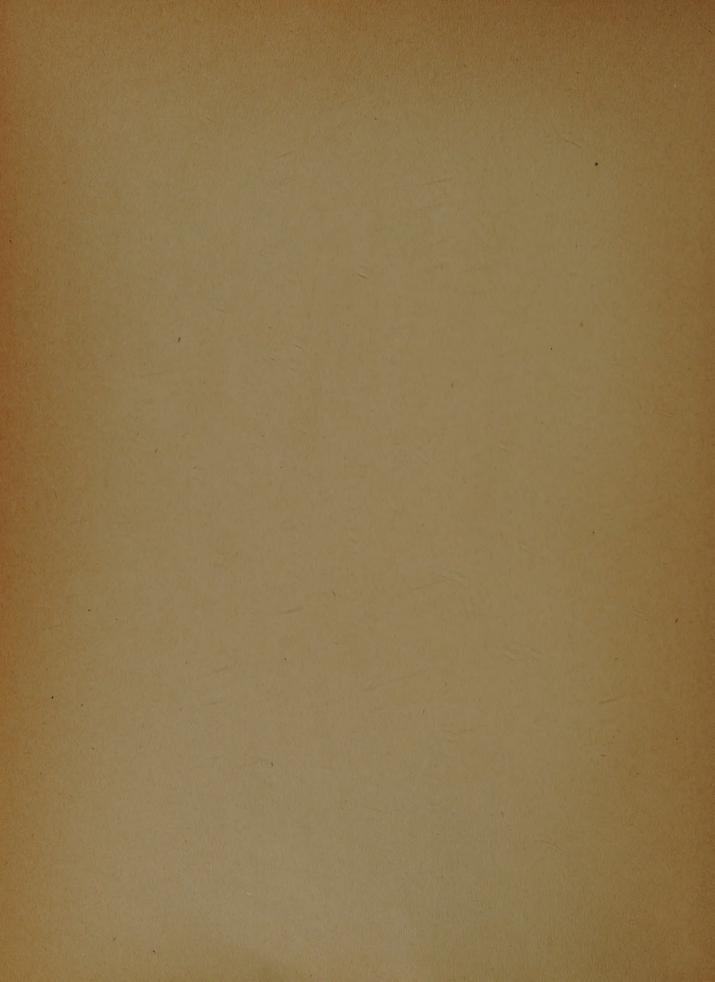
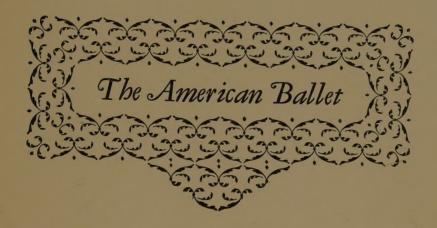


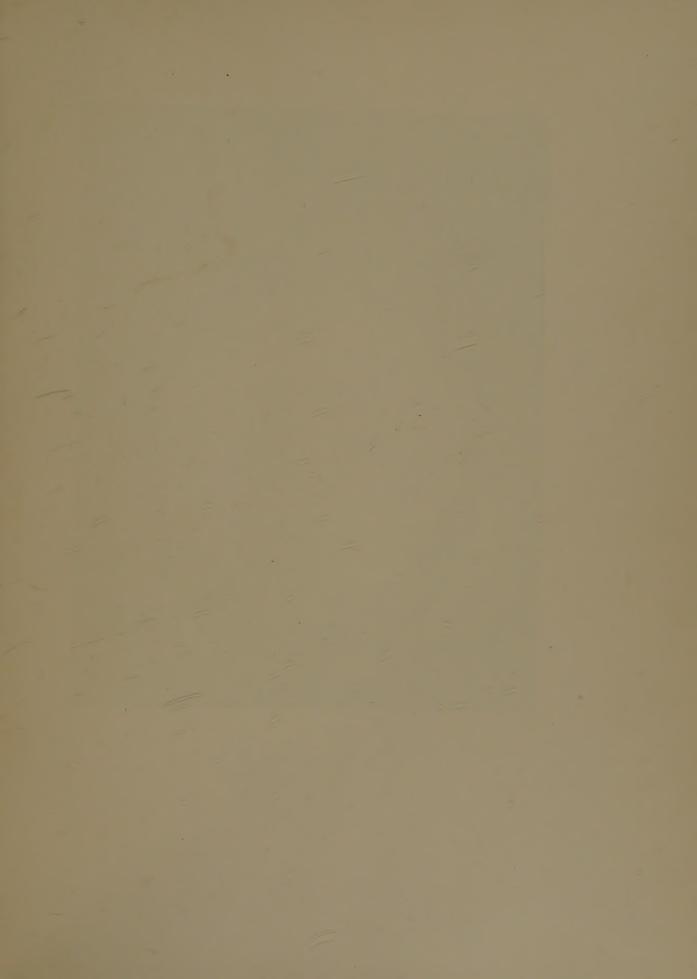


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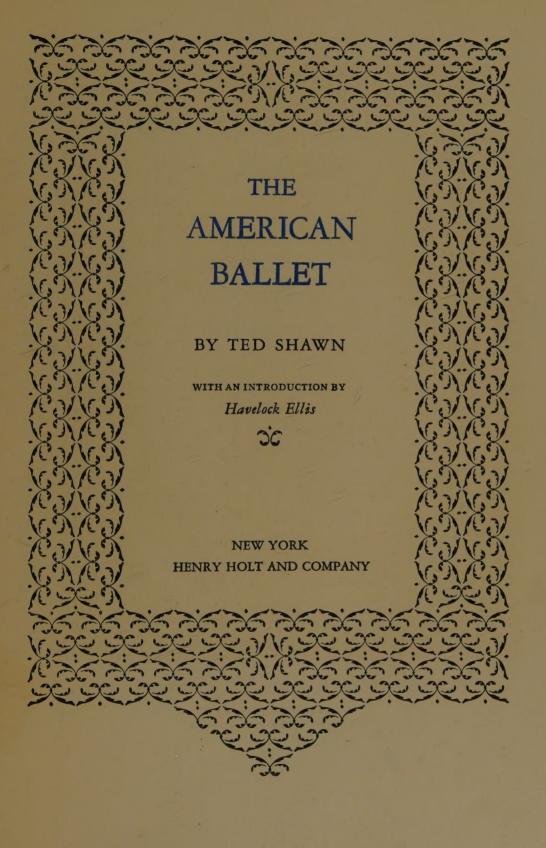






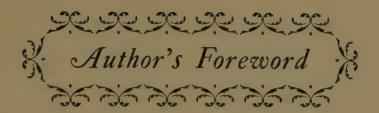






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FOR nearly two decades, a great renaissance of the art of the Dance has been in process in America. The long period of pregnancy is nearly at an end—the new birth is imminent. Like a great incoming tide, this cosmic force of the dance has been felt throughout the whole social structure of America—in private life, in educational institutions, in the theatre. Just as the first great waves foretell the flood to come, so came the first pioneers, Ruth St. Denis and Isadora Duncan. They rode upon the tide, were borne in to us by a force greater than themselves; but by apprehending and yielding to it they partook of its universality and infinite power.

I have chosen the title *The American Ballet* only after much thought — and then as an admission of defeat, for the word *ballet* has too definite associations with known forms, and the birth of the dance in America will make new forms, has already made new forms, which the word *ballet* does not adequately describe.

The dance of America will be as seemingly formless as the poetry of Walt Whitman, and yet like *Leaves of Grass* it will be so big that it will encompass all forms. Its organization will be democratic, its fundamental principles, freedom and progress; its manifestation an institution of art expression through rhythmic, beautiful bodily movement, broader and more elastic than has ever yet been known.

I feel that I, too, am merely a wave carried in on this tide — my function to focus and enunciate the crystallizing form of the Dance of Life in America.

T. S.





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I have been asked to write a few words to place in front of this book. My first thought was that there could not be a more unsuitable person to introduce such a book to the public, since I neither have any practical connection with the ballet nor any scientific knowledge of dancing. But on second thought I realised that that was probably the very reason why I was asked to come foward. Mr. Ted Shawn writes as an enthusiast, as one who, with Miss Ruth St. Denis, is identified in the closest and most conspicuous manner with an art which he feels to be of supreme importance for civilisation in general and America in particular. It was desirable for someone to declare that even from the viewpoint of one who is far from being a master of the art of dancing, there is an element of reason and truth in the eloquent pleading of my friend, Mr. Ted Shawn.

That, at all events, I can do with profound conviction. It cannot, moreover, be brought against me that I am merely carried away by the wave of applause which has today brought dancing into fashion. I will not go so far as to say that my interest in dancing dates from the time when, as a small child (so I was later told), I could not run without leaping into the air at every few steps. I will not even date it from my earliest school-days when, as a child of seven, dancing was a routine part of my education. That must have been almost unknown in those days in a boys' school, and I doubt if it is widely known even now, but the Head of that school

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was a woman, a Mrs. Granville, a remarkable woman, who had been inspired by the ideas of the great Swiss educational pioneer, Pestalozzi. I may here say a word incidentally for an aspect of dancing not touched on by Mr. Shawn since it was outside his special subject, and that is the place of dancing in general education and hygiene. It can never be more than a small place and yet it might be significant. If children were brought up with even a slight training in group-dancing they would, on the one hand, have the chance to learn to move with grace and to understand concerted movement, while, on the other hand, by knowing at all events the alphabet, they would be in a better position to appreciate the complex poems into which that alphabet may be woven by the artists of dancing. I have long been convinced of the educational and hygienic value of dancing and those exercises which partake of the nature of dancing rather than of gymnastic athletics. But — to return — without going back to childhood I can still trace my interest in dancing to a period when the art was commonly supposed to have receded forever into the background. At that time, more than thirty years ago, my friend Mr. Arthur Symons was entrusted by a London newspaper with the task of visiting the Music Halls, as the places of vaudeville entertainment have in England always been termed, to report whatever of interest he could find, and there was nothing in those places, for his eyes as for mine, of more interest than the rare manifestations of fine dancing. So it frequently happened that I had the privilege of accompanying him in the search for dancing. Later on, when Isadora Duncan arrived in Paris to expound her revolutionary methods, I chanced to be there, and I still recall the widely divergent opinions, some of them highly contemptuous, which those methods evoked.

When we realise all that has taken place in the art of dancing since then, and how rapidly it has taken place, we can easily under-

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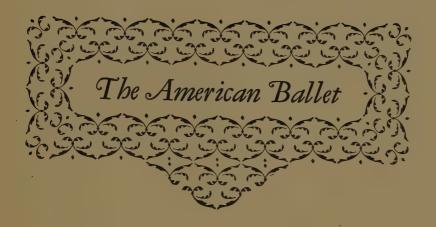
stand that the world has not become adjusted even yet to the appreciation of this revived and transformed art. There is much that is painful to read in Mr. Ted Shawn's revealing chapter on "Dancing and the Theatre," and, however slight our acquaintance with the matter may be, we cannot fail to know that the facts he has set down are not exaggerated. The path of the genuine artist in dancing today is rather like the path to martyrdom. The world is prepared to appreciate the dancer, but the world has not yet prepared a stage, and still less a temple, to receive the dancer. There is the concert hall ready for the musician, and there is the opera house where the ancient formal Italian ballet is permitted to figure as a mere interlude, but otherwise the dancer must fight with all sorts of vested and traditional interests, and in the end submit to an often heart-rending compromise, in which the artist's conception is lost. It is inevitable; it must happen in the new birth of any art. But the time is coming for the next step. It is evidently the recognition of that fact which has stirred Mr. Ted Shawn to write this book. The scheme he here outlines may be too large to carry out fully in the immediate future; but there seems no reason why it should not at once be begun. One cannot easily see how support for such a beginning can fail to be found.

However that may be, I can only say that, even looking at the matter from the outside and afar, while admitting that some of the claims made here for the American Ballet may be discounted, yet I, for my own part, feel well assured that this is a thing that has to be done. In the world as we find it today many excellent forms of art which flourished in an earlier day have died out, and it has seemed to some that Man himself has become the slave of the machinery he created and so lost his old supremacy. For the pessimist the outlook is not promising. But it is hard to believe that the spirit of optimism is dead. That spirit will meet the assertion that civilisation has

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displaced Man with the new assertion that another civilisation is arising to restore Man to his place. Of such a civilisation not merely the symbol but the actual evidence will be a revived art of the dance.

HAVELOCK ELLIS.







CHAPTER I THE SPIRITUAL BASIS

"If we are indifferent to the art of dancing, we have failed to understand, not merely the supreme manifestation of physical life, but also the supreme symbol of spiritual life."

THE DANCE OF LIFE



TAKE my text from the dancer's patron saint, Havelock Ellis, and from that book of his which gives the most divine revelation of the height, breadth and depth of the art of dancing. Ellis is Anglo-Saxon, English merely by accident of birth, for spiritually he is more akin to America. Here his works have been

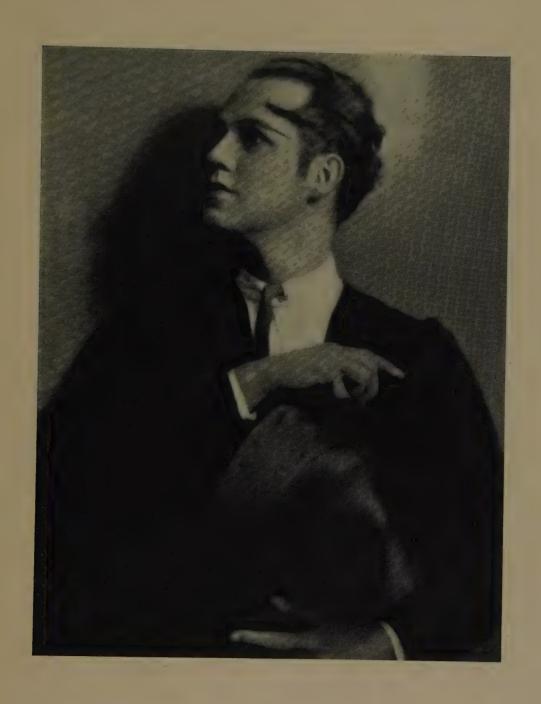
hailed as the utterances of a new Messiah, when in England they were suppressed and Ellis almost persecuted; here, he has had his greatest appreciation always, and the greatest following in actual numbers.

The statement quoted above is one which I have read, pondered over and quoted to my pupils for eleven years. It is a profoundly true statement and, as a germinal idea, is like radium, continually giving off light, heat and power, yet never depleting itself.

Ouspensky, in his Tertium Organum, points out so clearly that the idea of anything is its imperishable reality. We may take a chair, for example; destroy any actual chair, and you have not harmed the idea of chair — in fact, from the indestructible idea of chair, that

very chair which you destroyed can be duplicated for all practical purposes. Thus, a faulty idea or concept of chair would produce a faulty actual chair, and an incorrect blue print or incomplete one would result in a house badly proportioned, or actually incapable of standing.

Therefore, the core idea of Dance is the most vital thing for us to apprehend first, before we attempt to manifest forms of dance. In actual life, however, we first become conscious of the idea of dance through someone's else visible manifestation of dance, and with study of many outward forms, we arrive at some comprehension of inner reality. The history of the dance itself began the other way around. It began with a central inner impulse and worked its way outward and became visible in physical movement. Whether we believe in evolution or in the Bible legend exactly as it is written about the beginning of man, we must assume that in the primitive states of humanity the savage man had all that he could do to take care of his material needs, to get enough food, to find a place that was safe to sleep in without fear of being destroyed by wild animals, to get skins to keep himself warm during the cold weather, to find a mate and take care of her and the children he had by her. Eventually he was able to arrange his life so as to take care of all his material needs and have some time left over. That meant he could do something for the sheer joy of doing it, something that did not have a specific material end in view. He had time to express himself, time to give vent to his emotions, to his feeling life. When we do that thing, do something for the sheer joy of doing it, we call it play. When we do something which is an expression of emotion and a manifestation of feeling consciously done for that purpose, we call it art; the two are closely and inseparably intertwined. Art is the most joyous way of playing that man has ever discovered. and also, it has been said, it is the most arduous work about which





we know anything. It is that work which is most worthy of man's perfected powers, because everything else perishes and art alone endures.

When primitive man in his first leisure time played and gave vent to his first art instinct, he could do only one thing, and that was dance. He had no instruments with which to make instrumental music; he had not learned the use of his voice from a tonal standpoint, so he could not sing; he had no organized language out of which to form poetry; he had no implements with which to express himself in the graphic or plastic arts — no pencils, crayons or paints, no modeling tools, no hammers, no chisels. He had nothing but his body which he began to move in definite, regular, rhythmic movements, and he discovered that after keeping these movements up sufficiently long, he induced in himself a state of ecstasy or frenzy — a condition which was above or beyond and different from his normal and everyday condition. He believed that a god or some supernatural power had entered into his body, and had taken possession of him; and so he had his first concept of deity through the dance. He had his first actual vital contact with supernatural forces. He found that by repeating this rhythmic movement he could always bring back this same state of ecstasy, or frenzy, or hysteria which to him was, in truth, God. And so the dance was the first way of contacting divinity and was thus the source out of which religion, as well as religions, came.

Some people have said that the savage man's dancing was entirely religious dancing. It certainly had that beginning, and because in his life thoughts of religion played so big a part, so in his dancing religion played a big part. Religion with the savage man was something very much akin to what we call superstition. It certainly was not the abstract, metaphysical thing that we call religion today. He had such vast ignorances about many facts which

now are understood by every child. Floods, thunderstorms, earthquakes, cyclones were all to him the expression of angry gods. The wind blowing through forests was the speaking of spirits and the thunder was the voice of a deity. Because he was constantly afraid of all these underlying forces of nature, he was constantly placating unknown powers; and he had dances to soothe and mollify these powerful gods. He also had other dances — he had dances for everything he was capable of feeling, he had dances for every occasion of life; dances at the time of planting of seeds, dances to invoke rain, dances at the harvest to give praise for big crops; he had dances for joy at the birth of a male child (the arrival of a female child was not a joyful occasion); he had dances for grief and funerals; dances that were preparatory to battle, dances that were symbolic of victory and conquest; dances of love, of wooing and courtship; dances of sheer gymnastic joy; but fundamentally the large majority of his dances were of a religious import because a large portion of his thought was religious.

Every nation in the world's history has expressed in dance what was its most potential characteristic. Egypt, which had a stupendous church organization, created a ritualistic dance, formal, austere and hieratic. Greece, which had a culture richer and more beautiful than any other civilization that has ever been known on the face of the earth, evolved a dance which was free and beautiful, proportionate and symmetrical, a synthetic expression of all the arts, religion, science and philosophy. Rome, in its period of power and its correlative indulgences in material sensations, produced a dance which was orgiastic, sensual and theatrical. The period of the incoming Christian church, because of the tremendous ascetic influence of the church, almost crushed the dance out of existence. Then, as we came on to the Renaissance period, the dance began to have its first revival after the terrible oppression of the dark ages.

In the seventeenth century, when the classic ballet of Italy, nurtured by France, had reached the point of becoming a recognized national institution, it reflected that period as the dance has ever done. It was a dance of artificial and superficial graces, observant of custom and convention to the last degree, dealing with themes of sentimentality, delicately perfumed and powdered intrigue and infidelity — the same subject matter with which Watteau and Fragonard dealt in painting.

Spain, which has always been unique as a nation, has a unique dance form, revealing arrogance, hot passion, love of power, pride of body, and Oriental admixtures of blood. The restraint and centuries-old repression, the very sparing use of line, and the valuation of space which we find in Japan's graphic arts, we find in its dancing — a people on a tiny island empire who had to conserve and make the symbol take the place of actuality, who developed an extraordinary sense of honor and rigidity of ritualistic conventions. In the Russian dancing we find the barbaric frenzy of those half-savage, half-animal peoples described in Saltus's Imperial Orgy and by Merekowski in Peter and Alexis — the Tartar and the Cossack, the Grand Duke and the serf — a people of vivid color, outrageous excesses, and perverted sense of romance, a people on the verge of a doom which has since overtaken them politically.

Now the question comes down to what is the spiritual basis of the American people. What is the fine thing, what is the deep and abiding and permanent thing which we have to express through the medium of the dance? The first and voluntary answer is that jazz is the expression of the American people through the dance, and because it is the first and easiest answer it is, of course, the most false. One of the old East Indian sayings is: "The first appearance of Truth is Illusion", and so jazz as the expression of America in the dance is a lie. Jazz is the scum of the great boiling that is now

going on, and the scum will be cleared off and the clear fluid underneath will be revealed. What is the real thing underlying this hysterical, excitement-craving, sensational form of dancing that is going on on the ballroom floors of today? Those of us who are living in New York, whether permanently or temporarily, are in an atmosphere which is the most un-American of any spot in the whole United States. New York is cosmopolitan, it is a city of the world and not a city of America. The architecture of New York is a unique architecture. The big cities of the country are imitating and copying that architecture, but the ideas and ideals of New York are not American in spirit. It has a huge foreign population which intends to remain foreign; therefore, if we are to understand what the message of America is, we cannot expect to find anything but a very small portion of it in New York.

First we must go back to the cause, the spiritual urge which gave birth to this nation. The story is known so well that I do not need to repeat it — of how people in England and other of the European nations, oppressed by religious intolerance, by political, financial and other injustices, fled to these colonies and declared an independence on the basis of spiritual freedom. The foundation of America was by a large percentage Anglo-Saxon. The principles upon which our constitutions are built are the principles of Anglo-Saxon men — high-souled, religious, spiritual-minded men who wanted to found a nation upon a higher moral basis, and a higher religious and spiritual principle than any nation ever yet had been founded. That we do not live up to these principles is our shame, but our heritage is infinitely bigger than we are.

Any nation only one hundred and fifty years old has found itself where we find ourselves today. The history of the nation is almost a repetition of the history of the race. First, there is the necessary preoccupation with physical necessities — cities to be built, forests

to be razed for lumber, savage tribes to be subdued, transportation facilities to be established, and arteries of communication to be extended. That is largely what we have been doing. But today the country is linked up from ocean to ocean and from North to South. There is no frontier left, and the negative statement of the attainment is set forth admirably in the foreword to Sinclair Lewis's Main Street, where he views the mediocrity, the cheapness and tawdriness of easy standardization, the facile multiplication of meretricious things, as the goal we have attained. There is nothing left for us to conquer so far as the natural wildernesses of this continent are concerned, but the wilderness of our national art consciousness is producing just now its great pioneers. For all through this material conquest period, we have been as colonists always are to the mother nations. We have accepted our laws and our customs from other nations, we have accepted our fashions of clothes from the older countries, and our art was that which they gave us. In the very beginning there was no thought of any local art production, everything came over the seas to us. The drama was imported, and the actors were imported; music was composed and played by foreign musicians; we patronized foreign painters and foreign sculptors. Then, the study of the indigenous art began to formulate, little shoots began to spring up. Of course, the older nations looked with amusement and scorn upon the feeble efforts of this infant nation, but within the last decade a very decided change is taking place. Before the war, to speak of America and art in the same breath was an automatic signal for ribald laughter. The Germans had a saying, "Art is caviar for Americans," that is to say, something we could not appreciate and for which we had no taste. And in our own art of dancing this worship of the foreign was very evident. I remember distinctly the day when dance students emerged from their schools with names changed from Smith

to Smithinsky, Jones to Joneskvitch, and from Brown to Brunelle, and no dancer seemed to think that she was properly introduced to the public unless the label of the Imperial Ballet of Moscow was somehow tacked on her name. About ten years ago there were in America about as many exponents of the dance claiming to be from the Imperial Ballet of Moscow as there were articles of furniture that were stated to have come over in the Mayflower, and just about as large a percentage of them genuine. A great change has taken place. We find a girl with a Russian name incorporating The American National Ballet, Inc.; we find a Russian touring the country with an American Ballet: a Russian in vaudeville with the First American Ballet — and so it goes. The American idea has now caught on, and nothing succeeds like success. To get back to fundamentals, the reason the dance of America is succeeding is because it has gone back to first principles and realized that unless we dance from our own God-consciousness, from the center of our being, unless we express through the medium of the dance the highest and finest thing of which we are capable, the most cosmic thing that we can conceive, we will merely be imitating and following in the path of the dying systems of the older nations.

America has very little past, but as to our future, our opportunities are limitless. And so we are not concerned with looking down into the traditions of our soil, but with looking up into the sky to see how big we can grow. We are building on universal lines, not narrow, trivial lines. We are using cosmic themes and not the themes of petty human complications. This renaissance of the dance which is now taking place, and which we all recognize, owes its beginning to the pioneering of two great American dancers, Ruth St. Denis and Isadora Duncan. In all of the writings in regard to the Russian ballet, the Russians themselves state that it was after seeing Isadora Duncan dance in Russia that the great Romantic

Revolution took place. They saw that a new idea, colossal in its import, had been shown to the world, and recognizing it, they broke away from the old traditions of the ballet.

The organization which we know as the Diaghilew Ballet Russe, the parent plant from which all of the other Russian ballets came to us, was the result of pouring the wine of the American inspiration into the bottles of the European classic ballet tradition. The inevitable happened and the bottles burst — for, to change suddenly to another metaphor, the brilliant, meteoric decade of the Russian ballet which is over, never to return in its pristine glory, was the swan-song of the ballet as a creative and progressive system.

But here in America, also born from the first seed of the American pioneers, a stronger and more wholesome tree has been slowly and sturdily growing. This is because the American growth is from the spiritual seed. The Russians saw everything but the very core of the idea. They did not realize the sources that these two pioneers had contacted. The themes of the old ballet were themes of limited human emotions. The triangles of human desire and human jealousy; adultery, murder and revenge, were their chief concern. These were lightened now and then by the triviality of sentimentalism. There was never once in the entire repertoire of the Russian ballet a dance idea with a deep spiritual or religious impulse. Miss St. Denis, rebelling from the old forms of the dance and the spirit of the dance which was current in the world at the time of her beginning, had the instinct to get back to the source of life and to come outward from that. And so, vibrated by the Orient, Egypt and India particularly, where religion and spiritual thought play so vast a part in everyone's life, she clothed her impressions in Oriental art forms. In her dance Rahda, the Hindu Temple Dance, The Mystic Dance of the Five Senses, she gave to this age and generation the first definite religious idea in dance form we have seen,

and her whole career has been based upon the expression of the God-consciousness through the dance. That does not entirely mean the ritualistic form nor a pious or sectarian theme, because the God-consciousness is a state of being, permeating every act and activity of our lives. It is a center to start from and not a circumference which limits and binds us. One can start from his God-consciousness and work outward into a dance which may have all the appearance of being trivial and inconsequential, but he will know the difference and his audience will know the difference.

In my own case, I arrived at the same result from a different starting point. Studying to be a Methodist minister, I was interrupted in my junior year of University by a severe illness, which kept me in bed quite motionless for many weeks. During this enforced quiet I had time to think deeply, and I thought myself out of the ministry, out of the Methodist church, and free from all previous moorings. And when I finally crystallized, within my consciousness, and came out with a form, it was the form of the dance as religious expression. Of course, all of my friends thought that I was headed straight for the south gate of Hell. It was not really a change of base at all, it was only a change of form; and when I met Miss St. Denis, we found that our fundamental concept of the dance was the same. She, pursuing the dance upstream to its source, found there religion, and I, pursuing religion upstream, found the dance was the first and finest means of religious expression, and so we have been wedded artistically and humanly ever since. And our whole endeavor is to make possible a school of the dance which works from a spiritual and religious center and which tries to go on creating new forms of the dance — finer, broader and better than any forms have been before. We are constantly experimenting. and like all pioneers, we find our efforts very crude. When an idea is newly born, it looks strange and red-faced, without teeth and





hair; but people who know babies know a healthy baby, even if it is not very beautiful, and so we know, when a new idea is born, whether that new idea is robust, and whether it is going to grow up into a fine healthy form or not.

One of the things that I hope to do through the medium of the dance is to express in bodily movements, in the creation and coordination of mass movement, together with stage picture, the same cosmic consciousness, grown out of Americans oil and embodying American ideas and ideals, as Walt Whitman has done in his Leaves of Grass. Walt Whitman is probably the greatest soul that has ever been born on the American continent. He is a Titan and his art form the most tremendously American that has been produced in our country so far. Whitman loved everything and everybody. There was no phase of life but that he had a place for it in his heart, and understanding for it. He realized that Allness was good, and that there was no good and evil; that the great mistake was in believing in two powers. He did truly believe "to understand all is to forgive all." His being was the being of the Cosmos, his vision illumined, as has been that of all the great prophets of old. And the voice of America had to be a cosmic voice, nothing less could adequately have expressed the place of this nation and its purpose in the world.

The buds of ideas, the buds of art, of science, of religion, of philosophy are coming out all over this huge tree of America. On the trees of other nations we see full grown leaves, brown leaves and falling leaves. It is logical and right that the new things of value to the human race appearing in the world today should come through this newest, robust and growing nation.

It is natural and to be expected that the renaissance of the art of the dance should find its cradle in America. For we do realize that, as Havelock Ellis says, "Dancing is the loftiest, the most

loving, the most beautiful of the arts, because it is no mere translation or abstraction from life; it is life itself."

We approach the dance as a thing of utmost importance neither religious observances, nor political machines, nor educational institutions rank in vital significance with the way we dance. It is our concern that the dance of America shall express the richness, the dignity and mellowness of our national tradition; that it have the bigness of heart and the long-suffering of our Lincoln; the vastness of our plains, the majesty of our mountains, the fertility of our soil. We must release through the American dance that spirit which would bear hardship, poverty and even death rather than submit to mental and spiritual tyranny. Because we are young, it is inevitable that we shall be full-blooded, vigorous, passionate, and joyous in our dancing. But, beyond this, because of the tradition of our Anglo-Saxon forefathers, who fought and died to make it possible for us to have life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, we must in all our activities be a torch to the world, and in the dance most of all.



CHAPTER II

THE SOURCES OF THEMATIC MATERIAL

HE obvious themes which first come to mind when one thinks of American art production of any kind are the Indian and Negro. The sources are many more and varied, but since these are on the surface, I will start with them.

The Indian claims first attention because he is the indigenous native. The continent belonged to him until the white people came and killed or banished him to reservations where life was made as sterile and unindian as a constitutionally unsympathetic Indian commission could make it. Now that the Indian as a physical menace is hardly more than a memory of our grandparents, it is discovered that he was a great artist, and for years the Smithsonian Institute has put out field workers in his archæology, his graphic and plastic arts, folklore and music. But because dancing is still the Cinderella among the arts, there has been no government recognition of the art of dance as being worth preserving or recording. On the contrary, the bureaucratic mind being what it is, the dancing of the Indians is looked upon as degrading, morally and industrially, and veiled threats in the form of letters from the Indian Commissioner, one of which I have read, indicate an official intention to blot out such remnants as still exist.

This is nothing short of a great artistic crime. The art of the dance is the fundamental art of the human race, and it is of greater importance that we preserve and record the authentic dances of the Indians now alive than that we preserve all their other arts.

The Indians are a people who had a religion of a high order, of ethical nobility and constructive in its spiritual influence. Some of the tribes are mystically endowed far beyond the most sensitive and advanced souls of the entire white race. By imposing an alien culture and religion upon them, we have done what has been done in the South Seas, deteriorated a fine people, who saw nothing desirable in our culture, yet fell victims to our vices which were stronger than their powers of resistance.

Recording Indian dances would be difficult because of the still very strong prejudice and superstition against the camera. In some of the pueblos of the Southwest, dance ceremonies have been delayed until "the man with the black box" went away. He was followed beyond the village and watched to see that he kept going, then the signal, "on with the dance", was given.

If, however, it were explained to the tribal chief that these primitive and religious dance rituals were to be recorded for posterity, and under government direction, it might be accomplished by moving pictures and phonograph records. Notations of the music or accompaniment could then be made and the mystic significance of the dances written down.

After having studied Indian dancing upon scattered and unrelated occasions for many years, it was my privilege to see in January, 1924, a real and complete dance ceremony, in the pueblo of Isleta, New Mexico. My friend, Miss Erna Ferguson, of Albuquerque, New Mexico, whose life is devoted to achieving recognition, public and official, of the superlative art value of the Indian, had word of this dance, which never comes on a set day but mysteriously hap-





pens, the day and hour arrived at no one knows how. She drove me some hours to this picture village — white adobe houses around an open square, blue New Mexico sky, bluer than the Mediterranean at its best, and the inevitably right masses of color made by the Indians' red blankets, coal black, straight hair, silver and turquoise jewelry.

This ceremony takes place at the winter solstice, or thereabouts. Seeing the days grow shorter and shorter, about December twenty-first they decide that something must be done, so the war chief appoints one day to perform a dance prayer which will persuade the sun to come back. And each year the ceremony is successful—the days immediately begin to grow longer!

There are nearly sixty dancers. Each man, stripped to the waist, torso and face painted with designs of sky-blue, branches of evergreen tied to arms, legs and head and carrying gourd rattles in his hands, was followed by a woman dancer, fully and elaborately dressed in brilliant colors and much jewelry, but with a finer sense of line and color harmony and better taste than I have ever seen in any native Oriental. The dance had started at sunrise in the Kiva, which is a meetinghouse, half temple and half lodge room, and had already been going on for hours, the whole pattern of the dance taking about forty minutes and followed by a twenty minute rest period, and this continued until sunset. It has been said by good authority that these particular Indians, the Hopi and the Pueblo tribes, are people of great mystical insight. And certainly this dance gave one, if one had any vision, that sort of feeling. It was a combination of rhythm worked out in metrical accuracy, and vet was so subtle that after watching it over and over again, I still do not know what it was, yet I am absolutely convinced that there was a definite pattern on which they danced. It was absolutely beyond me to analyze and catch this rhythm. It was the most fasci-

nating thing I have ever seen. They worked together as a unit, in a manner that would have done credit to the Tiller Girls. The formations were beautiful and varied, the steps of this one dance, because it was the one dance which they were doing over and over again, did not cover a great variety of movements. Mischa Elman, and one or two other noted musicians, who have seen this dance, have been absolutely baffled by its rhythmic structure. I have seen Hopi men do the Eagle Dance. There is no living white man today (and that includes all of the greatest of the Russian Ballet, as well as American dancers, including myself) who, after spending a year studying this dance, would be able to reproduce it. There was the most extraordinary rapidity of movement that I have ever witnessed. The Kinneys in The Dance remark: "The aboriginal savage, huge limbed, bounds through dances fitted to the limitations of muscles that cannot be controlled by brain, and the limitations of brain that cannot invent or sustain invention; his dance exposes him as a race, not in its youthful vigor, but in the degeneracy wrought less by time than by manner of living. The Indian of North America is dying of age; the Russian is in his youth." To those of us who know anything of the dancing of the American Indians in its purity who have, for instance, had the privilege of witnessing one of their marvelous religious dance ceremonies — this is a pitiful exposition of ignorance. The Pueblo Indians have dances whose chorographic form is equal to anything the Russians have ever done, costumed with an understanding of color as great as that of Bakst, and executed with such technique, combining clear-cut execution, variety of movement and extraordinary rapidity and lightness, that the most superlative technician of all the ballet schools would have to admit defeat if he tried to learn these dances under the most favorable circumstances.

This statement of the Kinneys is only representative of the

general ignorance on the subject of the Indian, and particularly of his dancing. The public knows something of his beadwork, baskets and blankets, but no collection of Indian dances can be viewed in American museums.

My own research, desultory and unsatisfactory as it has been, began about fifteen years ago when I became interested in the Aztec theme after reading Lew Wallace's The Fair God. Next I read Prescott's Conquest of Mexico, and then came a constant searching of the libraries of the country, as I one-night-standed month after month, each season. Eventually I met two artists who had specialized in the Maya, Toltec and Aztec arts, Henry Lovins and Francisco Cornejo, and continued my studies with them. I took an old Toltec legend and wrote a dance drama on the theme called Xochitl. I engaged Sr. Cornejo to design scenes and costumes and gave my action plot to Homer Grunn, a Los Angeles composer, who has specialized in the music of the southwest Indians, supposed to be the lineal descendants of the Aztecs. I was fortunate also in spending some days in the library of the University of Texas, just after it had received the shipment of a private library purchased in Mexico City, a collection of over a million pieces, books, codices, pamphlets and prints dealing exclusively with the prehistoric civilizations of Mexico.

With my second ballet, my interest, logically, went into the pueblos of Arizona and New Mexico. There I discovered a people whose art of dance is so prolific, so inexhaustible in its art content, that several life spans could be spent profitably in giving it to the world. I called my ballet *The Feather of the Dawn*, a Pueblo pastoral, and commissioned Charles Wakefield Cadman to write the score. The scene was a reproduction of the village of Walpi, and many of the costumes were authentic Hopi pieces.

The dance writing was, frankly, adaptation. One must see the

original, and become aware of its inner import as well as its visible pattern, but the literal reproduction is the function of the scholar and museum field worker. The function of the artist is to use authentic themes, as seeds from which to produce an art creation of his own.

The third ballet of my Indian Trilogy is in scenario form, not as yet produced. It deals with the Indians of the far Northwest, the Esquimaux of Vancouver Island, a different type entirely, some authorities say even of a different racial stock. Fascinating material is presented here, including some of the most ingenious decorative masks ever used by man, with mechanical contrivances to make beaks of birds open revealing an animal's head, whose jaws open, revealing in turn a human mask. Masks, by the way, have been used by many Indian tribes since prehistoric times, in their elaborate dance rituals.

This does not scratch the surface of the Indian material. Their legends, dance rhythms, music and art forms are inexhaustible and are more worthy of our study than the art forms of ancient Egypt, India or Persia. These Oriental fields have been so worked over, done by so many and often so badly, since Miss St. Denis first directed the attention of the dancers of the world to the Orient, that the themes have no freshness. There are Indian civilizations whose art product is as high in every way as that of ancient Egypt, and which has never been revealed to the outer world. This, surely, is one great charge laid upon the American dancers — to study, record and translate the dance art of the Indian to present and future generations.

The next obvious local color is that of the American Negro. The negro has a great many strings on our hearts and interests. His story is woven into our history. The most terrible crisis of our nation came over the question of the negro. Our own ancestors,

noble New Englanders, went to the African coast, seized these poor defenceless savages, brought them over and sold them. These people became part of the civilization of the southern section of our country. After generations there was a very strong sentimental bond. White children were nursed by black mammies; they grew up to love them. White children played with little colored children, although they sometimes looked upon these colored children in a superior and scornful way. The negro brought with him all the primitive simplicity of the rhythm of the savage, the unsophistication in regard to his body and its natural functions. Because of the structure of his vocal organs, the negro has a rich and beautiful voice, and an inherent love of sweet melody. In the negro today is the original savage plus all of his subsequent experiences: the terror of capture and the ocean voyage in small and crowded sailing vessels, slavery, with its attendant ills, families broken up and sold to other sections of the country. Being, as all savages are, deeply religious by nature, the negro adapted himself to the Christian religion and made his own version of it. From this he produced a unique phase of music, negro spirituals, which are enjoying the attention of scholarly musicians all over the world. He has produced a type of dancing which was not the savage dance of his African ancestors, but the dance which came out of his changed condition. It was a combination of his civilization with his savagery, of his pathos with his humor, and of his perfect and matchless rhythm with his sense of rich and rollicking melodies, which produced this dance. Because negroes are very simple in their emotional structure and in their mental and spiritual development, their attitude toward the physical body is one of great naïveté and the natural movements of the body are not sinful to them. And so their dances are innocently sensual. When one sees a negro do a dance of negro origin, he can do all sorts of things,

such as the movements in the "shimmy" and the "Charleston," and one likes it. It is his, and it belongs to him. But when one sees a white person do these dances, it is disgusting, because the negro mental and emotional conditions cannot be translated into the white man. The white man performs these movements with a conscious sophistication which changes their entire import. This does not mean, however, that we cannot study negro dancing with great profit as a source of production, and certain phases of it for the art dance of America.

We can study their rhythm and relaxation, their buoyancy and energy and their almost inexhaustible inventiveness in the manner of their steps. All of the tap dancing that we now know, buck and wing, soft shoe and shuffle, is of negro origin, and is a very interesting phase of dancing. I believe that we will be able some day to produce a negro ballet which will be a real art production taken from its native material and refined. By refined I do not necessarily mean emasculated. By refining I mean shaping the original elements, which now are folk forms, into forms that will become art forms.

This is the point at which the average person stops when considering sources of American art inspiration. It is from here on that some of our most interesting material lies, and our most American material, if we consider ourselves as more truly Americans than the two alien races of the red man and the black man.

There is much more in the Anglo-Saxon history of America to produce dance themes than one might at first suppose. The English colonists brought over their court and folk dances. The Sir Roger de Coverley, with very slight changes, became the Virginia Reel. In New England the parent stock of English folk dancing gave birth to quite new forms, real American dances, called contra-dances or country dances, and in smaller villages in New England these are

danced today just as they have been danced for ten or more generations. The March and Circle, The Boston Fancy, The Lady of the Lake, Hull's Victory, The Trip to Nahant are American dances which mirror a cross section of the New England which was the cradle of our nation. Out of these I arranged the dances called Boston Fancy, 1854, used in our programs for several seasons.

There are other American folk dances worthy of research. Cecil Sharpe, the great English folk dance authority, found that the Kentucky mountains had a dance which he gave months to recording. It was a unique form originating with these people.

The waltz and polka, although transplanted from Europe, serve as a vehicle to revive scenes and costumes of our own American history.

The Spaniards and the Italians believe that Columbus discovered America, but if one is in England, particularly in the city of Bristol, any such statement is almost a punishable crime. The Cabots set sail from Bristol and the Cabots were the first, so the English say, to set foot on the soil of the mainland of North America, Columbus being content with the island of San Salvador in the West Indies.

However, Columbus did make a voyage which resulted later in Spanish colonists coming to the West Indies and Florida, and the transplanted Spaniards became an integral part of American history, not only on the East Coast but in Mexico, California, Louisiana and elsewhere. This whole subject is a legitimate field for research and production under the banner of the American ballet. So also with the colonists from the other nations, and the mixtures produced in America, unique to America, such as the Creoles of New Orleans, a fusion of French with Spanish and (some whisper) a touch of negro.

Our island possessions are fair fields of American dance conquests. Hawaii provides far more serious study than the Bird of

Paradise and the fake Hula dances of Broadway would indicate. Miss Edith Williams, a Denishawn student, born and reared in the Hawaiian Islands, has danced for us old religious dances, accompanied only by drums and chanting, which were a revelation and which in a Denishawn performance at The Town Hall, spring of 1923, brought ecstatic reponse from the intellegentsia and press.

Burton Holmes graciously printed for me a film of every bit of dancing ever photographed by him — a valued possession, I assure you, for a researcher of dance — and in it was one strip of native Igorots. It was so intriguing in its brief flash that I am eager to see and study more of them at first hand.

We possess an island called Guam, with a native population. What do they dance, what do they say through the dance? The American Ballet should know.

Our heritage of American literature is another vast field of dance inspiration. Whitman, the cosmic, the infinite, the inexhaustible comes first and always. There is nothing American possible to conceive that some line of Whitman's has not already given voice to in poetry. And there are others, lesser, but each giving a color to the palette. Bret Harte for early California, Robert Frost for New England, and Edgar Lee Masters for Illinois. Longfellow's *Hiawatha* could be done as a poetic, chanted dance romance, only decoratively Indian; Lafcadio Hearn's earlier writings help to recreate the now departed days of New Orleans and the West Indies.

This only points a way into an Ali Baba's cave of treasure, which I have not here the time nor place to display further.

In the frontier life and early phases of American village life types were developed which had their day and have passed away with the passing of the forces which created them. The cowboy, a picturesque, decorative creature with chaps, big hat, colored neck handkerchief, is now seen only in the movies and the rodeos. Let





us preserve him in the dance. The small town "smart aleck" whose imitation of big city elegance was so amusing — the suit of too strong a color, which did not quite fit, the pink, green, and purple shirt, the brown derby, his cocksure serious manner — this priceless picture I have tried to frame in a dance I created for Charles Weidman to the music of Dent Mowry's Dance Americane (why the French title, I do not know).

The great American legendary hero, Paul Bunyan, takes us into the past in the days of the great loggers. These tales have been put into book form by James Stevens; and Eastwood Lane, the composer, and I are now collaborating on a *Paul Bunyan Ballet*.

Mr. Lane has also enlisted my interest in another ballet which he has written, entitled *Sold Down the River*, a dance satire based on the immortal American novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

There are also avenues as distinctively American, those paths first trod by the pioneering feet of Isadora Duncan and Ruth St. Denis. Music visualization, the scholarly rendering of an actual classic composition into correlated movement, is the phase of the dance indicated by Duncan and developed by St. Denis. Its possibilities are as endless as music itself, and beyond the limitations of music are Miss St. Denis's experiments with the dance as an independent art, "the silent dance," without any musical accompaniment. Those who saw Tragica, the composition of Doris Humphrey in this field, realize that it merely marks the shores of a vast uncharted sea of the dance art. The synchoric orchestra, a conception of Ruth St. Denis, is also an epoch-making venture in the history of the dance. It is an organization of dancers, one for each instrument in a symphony orchestra, to visualize a symphony by each dancer dancing only to the notes of her assigned instrument.

Loie Fuller, another American, made discoveries in regard to stage lighting and the handling of huge silk scarfs and veils. In

the American Ballet her pioneering should be carried on, more closely relating the movement of body, fabric, music and light, making a real synthesis of these four elements.

There are yet abstract elements of America which I have only visioned, which must eventually find expression in the American dance. The rhythms of machinery, that colossal, almost terrifying mechanical dance of our factories and its enforced rhythm of human labor. The rhythm of our motor transportation, unique in the world's history, the rhythm and emotional expression of business commercialism, rampant now and worshipped as never before. The rhythm of our sports — football, baseball, tennis, rowing, golf; rhythms of our unique new architecture out-babyloning Babylon of old. We need never borrow material from any nation for we are full to abundance with undeveloped ideas and themes. It needs a dance Moses with the vision to see the promised land of the Great American Ballet and a Joshua of finance to "stay his hand," until the American dancers have all entered into and permanently settled their Canaan.



CHAPTER III

THE CLASSIC EUROPEAN BALLET TRADITION

HOW IT HELPS AND HOW IT HINDERS



HERE is no reason why tradition should in any way impede progress, and there is no reason for progress destroying anything fine that has been created in the past; but there is no vitality, no life without progress, and progress means the appearing of new forms. They may be outgrowths of the old forms,

but with each new birth is new individuality that stimulates literature and the arts, as well as material invention.

In a book that came out about the time of the war, Mr. Britling Sees It Through, by H. G. Wells, there was, on page 68, the finest allegory I have read on tradition and progress. Life was likened to a herd of cattle. If we keep the herd of cattle and never kill a single animal, we have no meat to eat. On the other hand, if we kill off the entire herd, there will be no cattle to perpetuate, and, therefore, after the first great killing, we have no meat to eat. But by gradually killing them as we need food, we have meat to eat and we have the cattle left to perpetuate. The tradition of art is like the herd — it must be kept going; and if new forms do not appear in the art of dance, humanity is not fed; and if all of tradition progressed into nothing but individuals, each figuring to do something

new, soon the structure of the whole thing would die, because there would be no one preserving the traditions.

We have two extreme examples politically in the nations of China and Russia. China, worshiping tradition to an extreme degree, has stagnated, died and become the spoil of the other nations; Russia, overthrowing everything in the way of tradition, government, law and order, has plunged itself into a suicide of chaos and terror never equaled in the world before. America has tried to strike the happy medium. Rebelling from tyrannous and unjust law, it proceeded not into lawlessness and anarchy but into a better form of government — keeping all that was good of the old, but not being limited by it, forming a constitution the very basis of which was liberty and progress under ever expanding laws.

In the world of art, each generation's pioneers rebel against the classic tradition; the thing that seems so new to us today will be the thing against which the children who are now being born will rebel twenty years from now, just as we are rebelling against the limitations of the tradition which seems so fixed now but which was fluent only a few years ago. In the case of the dance, the tradition which now limits us is the tradition of the European classic ballet. This was also a new idea once. It was begun in Italy some centuries ago and found its way through the medium of straggling groups of Italian players and dancers and also by introduction into the courts. Catherine de Medici is reported to have brought certain dances from Italy to the French courts. Then after some generations, the French became so proficient in the dance that they produced dances of their own and dancers and great ballet masters of their own. Russia three or four hundred years ago became interested in the ballet; Italian, French and Spanish dancing teachers and ballet masters were imported, and in the beginning adhered to the form of ballet of that time, but later they too produced their own





ballet and used Russian dancers, a Russian ballet master and music composed by Russians. When they reached a certain point, there happened to come an outside influence. It is reported in all of their own books and books of the great art traditions of the dance that the influence of Isadora Duncan and Ruth St. Denis acting upon the established ballet in Russia gave them a vision of what was outside of the classic ballet tradition, and there came about a movement that is known as the "Romantic Revolution" of the ballet; and from the new vision which came out of America came the extraordinary Ballet Russe. It did not come into flower, however, until the ballet had reached the point where the dancers were all Russian born and Russian trained. The ballet masters were Russian, the music was composed by Russians, the scenery was designed by Russian artists, and the impresario was Russian.

Getting back to the classic tradition of the European ballet, what are the things it gives to us? I always think of the ballet as the mechanics of the dance. Its greatest service is to give us the ability to execute accurately, exactly and perfectly anything which we wish to execute. We deal in the ballet with an element of design as executed by the human body which is analagous to what we call mechanical drawing in the world of art — a compass is used to make a perfect circle, a "T" square to draw straight lines, and the idea is geometric perfection.

Quoting from *The Dance* by the Kinneys (page 96): "A certain conformity to geometrical exactness is necessary to the satisfaction of the spectator's eye, and is observed by all but the incompetent. Not that movement should be rigid — very much to the contrary. 'Geometry' is a sinister word; interpreted in a sense in which it is not meant, it would be misleading. An example is sometimes clearer than attempted definitions or descriptions.

"If, having given an order for a grandfather's clock, the recip-

ient found on delivery that it did not stand quite straight, he would be annoyed. Suppose then that further observation revealed that the face of the clock was not in the middle, that the centre of the circle described by the hands was not the centre of the face, that the face was no more than an indeterminate approximation of a circle, and that the numerals were placed at random intervals; the eye of the clock's owner would be offended. Various æsthetic and psychological arguments might be applied to the justification of his feeling, but they are not needed. The futility of near-circles, approximate right angles and wobbly lines is felt instinctively. Yet the eye rejoices in the 'free-hand' sweep of line correct in placement, though not subjected to the restrictions of straight-edge and compass. Asking for acceptance in such sense of the terms 'geometrical' and 'precision,' we may return to our discussion of the ballet.

"The decorative iniquity of the hypothetical clock attaches to all dancing that fails to give to precision the most rigorous consideration. The imaginary circle described in a pirouette, for example, is divided into halves and quarters. Let us suppose the pirouette to end in arabesque, stopping on the half-circle, bringing the dancer in profile to the audience; a very few degrees off the half-circle are, from the ballet master's point of view, similar to a few centimetres separating the misplaced clock hands from their proper situation in the centre of the dial. The petit rond de jambe has its imaginary quarter of the great circle in which to play, and which it must fill. In a fouette the sweep of the foot starts at the quarter-circle (marked by an imaginary lateral plane through the dancer's body) and reaches back just to the half-circle (defined by a similar plane, drawn longitudinally). The lateral elevations of the legs are likewise subject to law, the imaginary vertical circle described by the leg as radius being divided into eighths, to allow the leg to use the angle of forty-five degrees; experience shows that this diagonal,

half a right angle, is pleasing to the eye and not disturbing to the senses.

"The hands and forearms are turned in such a way as to eliminate elbows, the coincidence of a contour of the arm with an arc of a big (imaginary) circle being always sought."

The next point in which the classic ballet helps us is in the decorative sense. The ballet dancer is concerned not only with precision of movement but with decorative line. In the placing of arms in exact positions and in using the relation of the different positions of the arms to the different positions of the body, there is achieved an element of geometric design and accuracy. Pure straight lines and pure curved lines make for decoration which as an element of study is most valuable. Another thing the classic ballet tradition gives is an elegance of manner, a polish of style. The ballet rose to its height and had its "Golden Age" during the period when court life was also at its height. There never was a time in the world's history when the grandeur of court life equaled that of the French courts just previous to the great French Revolution, and the influence of that life on the dance was to produce a type of dancing that is full of arts and artifices. It was part of the French gentleman's accomplishments to use a snuffbox and to wear powdered wigs and hats with huge plumes and to make low bows. It was the expression of an age when the haute monde had nothing to do but to live exquisitely. No one worked, no one was engaged in business; the sordid things of life were completely removed and so well hidden that no one discussed them or thought about them. There was almost no progressive religious thought at that time. The Catholic Church had an enormous hold on the entire world during the Middle Ages. There were just a few instances of individual revolt, but on the whole the Church controlled absolutely. One's theology was all worked out. You went to church and the

thing was done — your soul was taken care of quietly, neatly and with dispatch. Thus the minds and emotions of the people were restricted to political and social intrigue, and the dance mirrored the quality of the thinking. To have that type of expression in one's vocabulary is most desirable. To have one's expression limited by that is, of course, most undesirable.

Another way in which the classic ballet serves us is that as a system of physical and muscular training it is very fine. The exercises which have been worked out over two or three hundred years of progress, taught by the great ballet masters of the past, give us routines of stretching exercises, bar exercises, floor exercises and ballet steps, all of which are analagous to the scales which a musician practices in order to attain facility, quickness, lightness and accuracy of touch. The entire physical and muscular training of the ballet is to the dancer the musical scales of the body, but it is just as colorless and just as meaningless as the scales played on the piano. They are movements gone through for a definite physical training purpose and as such are very good.

Another point where the ballet helps us is in its standard of good workmanship, of good craftsmanship. In order to dance well in the ballet, as the Kinneys point out in the paragraph which I quoted, anything less than a perfect circle when one intends to execute a circle is not satisfactory, and therefore one becomes trained in a habit of mind which does not excuse poor workmanship. Three or four degrees off is just as bad as not being there at all. Miss St. Denis has often used this example about things we do not get in life, and she explains, "If the thing costs a dollar, ninety-nine cents will not buy it. You can say, 'Look how hard I have worked and saved all these weeks and here is ninety-nine cents — can you not let me have that thing?' 'No, the price is one dollar — get the other cent.''

To discuss the limitations of the ballet as a system, first of all and most important is its narrowness and lack of vision in regard to thematic material. The ballet has always dealt so far as its subject matter is concerned with a trivial plane. It has dealt with matters of human love and jealousy and deceit and intrigue. Of religious thought, of actual spiritual vision, it has not had so much as a glimpse. I do not know of one ballet that has had a religious thought as subject matter except The Blue God, which was done by the Diaghilew Ballet, and which I am convinced was copied from or at least inspired by Miss St. Denis's Radha. It had some concept of a religious or spiritual idea back of it, since they had to have a Siamese legend to give them an excuse for doing this ballet. It was not a success and was not a ballet that was held in very high esteem, because it was not sincerely begotten. They did not have the inner thought which produced the form. Aside from that, I do not know of anything above the common plane of human emotions, except in such ballets as Les Sylphides, which was a drawing aside from life rather than rising into a more exalted life. In Les Sylphides there was no narrative — merely an atmosphere and a style, an exquisite, fragile, technical execution of a series of ballet steps, weaving arabesques of charming design, which, like those of the Moors, forbidden to make a likeness of any living plant, animal or man, achieves its effect of complicated lacelike symmetry through abstract line only. The ballet in Les Sylphides showed itself like the last aristocratic scion of a family so proud that through constant inbreeding it has dwindled down to this final exquisite, anæmic and impotent heir.

After Miss St. Denis and Miss Duncan had done their dances all over Europe, the ballet as produced by Diaghilew went into a much more varied and robust human emotion. Before that time, they had never done anything outside of their own type of classic

ballet. They responded to the spirit of the Orient, but they saw the Orient as a place of intrigue and passion and treachery, and so they produced Scheherazade. I remember my dear friend Mrs. Richard Hovey once said to me, after seeing the Diaghilew Ballet: "When one sees three queens love a man and kill him it becomes merely ridiculous." After all, what is there so attractive about vice? Why are they so concerned with the ugliness of life? Can't they look above the sordid things and give us something that will really help the world? But they have never done that. As long as the ballet was really growing, each new generation of dancers and ballet masters was making contributions of steps and combinations and movements to the next. They passed on some new step of feat. When it reached a certain place, no new forms were permitted into the system of the ballet and some two or three hundred years have gone by since there has been a new ballet step. I want to read to you the most extraordinary and beautiful defense of technique that has ever been written. It is from Havelock Ellis's Impressions and Comments (page 113).

"Technique is the art of so dealing with matter — whether clay or pigment or sounds or words — that it ceases to affect us in the same way as the stuff it is wrought out of originally affects us, and becomes a Transparent Symbol of a Spiritual Reality. Something that was always familiar and commonplace is suddenly transformed into something that until that moment eye had never seen nor ear heard, and that yet seems the revelation of our heart's secret.

"It is an important point to remember. For one sometimes hears ignorant persons speak of technique with a certain supercilious contempt, as though it were a mere negligible and inferior element in an artist's equipment and not the art itself, the mere virtuosity of an accomplished fiddler who seems to say anything with his fiddle, and has never really said anything in his whole life. To the artist





technique is another matter. It is the little secret by which he reveals his soul, by which he reveals the soul of the world. Through technique the stuff of the artist's work becomes the stuff of his own soul moulded into shapes that were never before known. In that act Dust is transubstantiated into God. The Garment of the Infinite is lifted, and the aching human heart is pressed for one brief moment against the breast of the Ineffable Mystery."

I wish that everyone had a typewritten copy of this and would carry it in his pocket and read it. I never read it but that I feel it is like some wonderful quotation from the Bible, that we can say over and over again, a quotation with a certain healing and stimulating power. Another thing I want to call to your attention is this — what technique produces is something that until that moment eye had never seen nor heard. Through technique the hearts are molded into shapes that were never before known.

Now the difficulty with the devotees of the classic ballet today is that they want us to learn to execute the old steps in exactly the way that they were done generations and generations ago, whereas the thing that we want to do is to learn to execute these old positions merely to get the body into a responsive condition so that we can acquire a technique and a vocabulary of gestures which have never before been seen in the world.

From a physical standpoint the ballet has its bad points as well as its good. I have never yet seen a ballet dancer trained exclusively in the technique of the ballet who has not acquired some very wretched habits in moving. Even one who stands to all of us as the most perfect of ballet dancers walks like a washwoman. I have seen her thrill a vast audience to the last minute on her toes, take her bow, and then clump off the stage. They do not realize that as a class they walk badly and that exclusive ballet training produces very bad walking. And there is a great tendency in the

custom of extreme training to produce an appearance as of a frog pinned on a board for dissection, a spread-out look of the body which is anything but attractive.

I believe ballet training is a necessary and desirable part of a dancer's training. But just as in high school or college, we would not consider even a thorough mathematics course an adequate education, so the dancer should add to the study of the ballet a study of the dancing of the Orient, of the principles of the dance of ancient Greece, of music visualization, which trains the body to be a musical instrument (with the related study of Dalcroze's eurhythmics), of the laws of Delsarte for emotional expression, of Indian and other primitive dances, of Spanish and other present day national dances.

Most of the ballet teachers I have talked to in the last fifteen years regret you do not dance their way. Some of them go so far as to say that if you do not dance their way it is not dancing that these strange fads that grow up, these Oriental dances, etc., are not dancing, and will blow away. Dancing is ballet dancing, and there is no other dancing. I have heard first-rate ballet teachers sincerely put forth just this view. We see how ridiculous and limited it is, but it is a harmful point of view to get abroad in the air, and it is bad to have impressionable young people get under such influence. About eleven years ago I went to Theodore Kosloff for some ballet technique. I have gone for some work to all of the great ballet teachers of the world today. I knew that Kosloff had been to our matinée the day before, but he did not indicate that he had ever seen me or even heard of me. When I was leaving he remarked that he had liked the Egyptian Ballet, but regretted tremendously that we had not done it in toe slippers, on our toes. This is exactly the same as if a water colorist, looking at a painting of Sargent's, had said: "He had talent, but should not have painted in oil; there is only one way to paint and that is in water colors."

Those dancers in the golden age of the ballet and those ballet masters who made great contributions to the system of the ballet are the ones who in the long run helped humanity the most because they gave a new school of dance. They were the creators of art. The greatest dancers who have danced extremely, even divinely, well, but have not created, are not comparable in the great summing up of things to the creators.

In the realm of music, Beethoven will always be a colossus compared to any person who plays Beethoven — even to Paderewski who has had one of the most phenomenal careers of any artist that ever existed. If you were to ask any musician as to the ultimate value in the art of music, he would either laugh at you or unhesitatingly say, "Beethoven." The interpreter always enjoys the greatest measure of adoration from the public. Paderewski has had a million times more applause than Beethoven ever had in all his life, and has earned millions of dollars, where Beethoven's entire earnings from his compositions could be numbered in the thousands. But in the ultimate analysis, there is no question that Beethoven was a colossus and Paderewski is a charming and talented musician who plays Beethoven.

I want to give you my sincere point of view in regard to that dancer who stands at the head of her line—Pavlowa—who is the greatest ballet or toe dancer on the stage today. It is my personal opinion that when Genée was actually dancing she represented the acme of technical perfection. But added to Pavlowa's technique is a human dynamic personality and other very fine points which have enabled her through a long period to keep constantly before the public in a great many countries of the world. Pavlowa is in the realm of the dance what Paderewski is in the realm of music—a superlative virtuoso. She has the technique, she has the fire, she has the personality to thrill audiences, to satisfy them from the standpoint of sheer

power which radiates in her dancing, but so far as I know she really has created nothing. I do not know of one single movement or step that she had added to the vocabulary of the dance. It is true that certain ballets have been arranged by her, but they have been arranged out of elements that are as old as the ballet itself. Not a single new approach to the art of dance has ever made itself visible in any of Pavlowa's performances. Olin Downes, a New York music critic, last winter wrote a very glowing tribute to Pavlowa. It was written not wisely, but too well. Mr. Downes said that in his estimation no one had made so great a contribution to modern music as Pavlowa. And Mr. Downe's remark brought an avalanche of letters, protesting letters from musicians, dancers, artists and literary people who came forward and said, while they admired Pavlowa tremendously for what she is, she had not only made no contributions to the art of music, she had not even treated music as intelligently as a good many other dancers had treated it. She had not even approached it in the way of music visualization which is the new note of the modern dancer's attitude toward music. Pavlowa stands exactly as Taglione stood a few generations ago and as Camargo stood before her. They had the adoration of their day, and with the passing of fifty or a hundred years, we admit they had charm and personality and a technical excellence, but it is the creators that we think of as the real benefactors to the progress of the dance.

In the art of painting, we speak of pre-Raphaelites and post-Raphaelites, because the art of painting was never the same after his life and influence. If we want to name great painters, we can name them by the hundreds, but there are only a few who stand out so that their influence changed the entire method of painting. And then there were Bach and Beethoven in the art of music. We believe that the names of Ruth St. Denis and Isadora Duncan will

take their places in relation to the dance as Michelangelo and da Vinci and Raphael have in painting and Bach and Beethoven in music. They have made such contributions to the art of the dance that it can never be the same. Because of their creative genius we will never as a people — as a race — as a world — dance quite the same way again.

Getting back to the classic ballet as a style of dancing, it is a style which we will always copy. There will always be certain personalities that will be attracted to the ballet as the type of dance that they most like to see; certain girls, naturally adapted to that type, when dancing will instinctively want to get up on their toes and will think a double pirouette is more precious than diamonds. Let us be glad if they are born into the world; glad if they perfect themselves. Let us enjoy them and encourage them. It will do our souls good and will help the art of the dance. But the ballet as a style is not the channel for progress any longer. New shoots are being born. Furthermore, from our own standpoint, the classic European ballet is not adapted to our American temperament. It is not a style in which our own native point of view will express itself. It is not a coat which we can put on and wear as if it fitted us by divine right. In the event of an American Ballet, whether an actual organization or merely a movement which is more or less generally recognized as carrying in it the elements of an American Ballet, it will not be done on the basis that Mr. Kinney suggests in his book — a ballet school with imported ballet masters from Europe to teach Americans how to do European ballet dancing. We have gone through the first step of history that the other races have gone through - just as France had Italian ballet masters, and Russia had French and Italian ballet masters. We have now had three or four generations of dance training from foreign teachers.

We have had and have the best of the ballet teachers of the

world. They are attracted to us because of our money and because we have an enormous number of talented people.

Ronny Johannson recently said to me, "The thing that strikes me is how gifted your young American boys and girls are — with what ease they dance beautifully." And that is true. We have a vast number of boys and girls who will easily make very fine dancers — dancers who will express the breadth of our plains and strength of our pioneers and height of our mountains through their souls and through their bodies.

We owe a debt of gratitude to the foreign teachers who have come to this country — we have learned a great deal from them. We have accepted everything they have to give us, but we cannot found our national school of the dance with foreign teachers at its head. There will never be an American Ballet except on the same basis that the Ballet Russe took place. After they had absorbed all that the Italian teachers, all that the French teachers, all that the Spanish teachers could give them, they rebelled and broke away from the old forms, and the company which made up the Ballet Russe was made up of Russian dancers, the music was by Russian composers, and their manager was a Russian. And if we are going to have a great American Ballet, it will have to be on the same basis: American born and American trained dancers. dancing to music by American composers, with scenery and costumes designed by American artists, and under the direction and management of American business men of great vision.



CHAPTER IV SOCIAL DANCING



HEN we hear the phrase "social" dancing, there is instantly conjured up in our minds a vision of that form of imbecility now holding forth on the ballroom and cabaret dance floors of all so-called civilized countries—the fox trot and its idiot brood, the shimmy, the Charleston, et al. If we consider the true "social" these dances are most decidedly not

meaning of the word "social," these dances are most decidedly not social and are almost anti-social. Let us consult Webster for definition of this word before we go further: Social. 1. Of or pertaining to companionship or mutual relationship and intercourse with others of one's kind. 2. Companionable; sociable; etc. Thus we see at once that social, as applied to dancing, covers a much wider field than couple dancing. In fact, Havelock Ellis even claims that the dance has been an important factor in the development of the social or community sense in the history of the advancement of civilization: "It is, however, the dance itself, apart from the work and apart from the other arts, which, in the opinion of many today, has had a decisive influence in socializing, that is to say, in moralizing, the human species. Work showed the necessity of harmonious rhythmic coöperation and imparted a beneficent impetus to all human activities. It was Grosse, in his Beginnings of Art, who first clearly

set forth the high social significance of the dance in the creation of human civilization. The participants in a dance, as all observers of savages have noted, exhibit a wonderful unison; they are, as it were, fused into a single being stirred by a single impulse. Social unification is thus accomplished. Apart from war, this is the chief factor making for social solidarity in primitive life; it was indeed the best training for war. It has been a twofold influence. On the one hand, it aided unity of action and method in evolution; on the other, it had the invaluable function — for man is naturally a timid animal — of imparting courage; the universal drum, as Louis Robinson remarks, has been an immense influence in human affairs. Even among the Romans, with their highly developed military system, dancing and war were definitely allied; the Salii constituted a college of sacred military dancers; the dancing season was March, the war-god's month and the beginning of the war season, and all through that month there were dances in triple measure before the temples and round the altars, with songs so ancient that not even the priests could understand them. We may trace a similar influence of dancing in all the cooperative arts of life. All our most advanced civilization, Grosse insisted, is based on dancing. It is the dance that socialized man.

Man having achieved civilization and socialization, such as it is, has used the social dance as amusement only. The group dances of primitive peoples and ancient nations had religious and mystic significance, and a practical effect on the unification of the tribe or cult. Folk dancing in European villages was indulged in purely for pleasure, but being dances performed by large groups — sometimes almost the entire community in the case of a small hamlet — they still retained their purpose of establishing a sense of unity among the participants. This group form of social dancing still exists in parts of Europe, and our own American country dances

are danced in some New England villages — rare ones — which have never suffered under the black hand of jazz.

Equally strong, if not stronger, as a contributing element to social dancing, is the sex motive. "Dancing," said Lucian, " is as old as love. In courtship the male dances, sometimes in rivalry with other males, in order to charm the female; then, after a short or long interval, the female is aroused to share his ardour and join in the dance. . . . In nature and among primitive peoples it has its values precisely on this account. It is a process of courtship and, even more than that, it is a novitiate for love, and a novitiate which was found to be an admirable training for love. Among some peoples, indeed, as the Omahas, the same word meant both to dance and to love. By his beauty, his energy, his skill, the male must win the female, so impressing the image of himself on her imagination that finally her desire is aroused to overcome her reticence. That is the task of the male throughout nature, and in innumerable species besides man it has been found that the school in which the task may best be learnt is the dancing school. Those who have not the skill and the strength to learn are left behind, and, as they are probably the least capable members of the race, it may be in this way that a kind of sexual selection has been embodied in unconscious eugenics, and aids the higher development of the race. The moths and the butterflies, the African ostrich and the Sumatran argus pheasant, with their fellows innumerable, have been the precursors of man in the strenuous school of erotic dancing, fitting themselves for selection by the females of their choice as the most splendid progenitors of the future race."

A third factor in social dancing is that joy of the individual in the sheer ecstasy of rhythmic bodily movement, his natural desire to achieve control and mastery over his own body and to defy the law of gravity. This is seen in many group dances where, in those

phases of the pattern in which a dancer is left unengaged, he breaks out into individual movements of athletic prowess and technical skill, thus embellishing the dance as a whole, and achieving individual expression and egoistic satisfaction.

Ballroom dancing is a direct derivative from court dancing, gliding and smooth turning steps being possible only on a polished floor. The peasants, having to assemble on the green or earthen floor of some public square, naturally danced with leaps and jumps and rough whirls more suited to the uneven footing and the exuberance of the open air and their uncouth manners.

But the early court dances were still mostly group dances—figures needing eight or more people. The first couple dancing also was concerned almost entirely with pattern and step, and the contact was very slight—a mere resting of fingertips on hand. With the waltz came the embrace—and delightful and varied as the figures of the waltz are, enchanting as its rhythm is—the embracing posture started the artistic and technical downfall of social dancing. No real dancing excellence is possible where two people are constantly clasped to one another. We notice that when exhibition dancers use the waltz or fox trot as a form on which to create a spectacle dance, variety is achieved by often parting for individual performance and by athletic lifting and turning "stunts"—both of which are departures from the original form and out of place in the crowded ballroom when general dancing is taking place.

In addition to the close-locked position making for very limited dance forms, the couple idea decreases the social value of dancing. In the Boston Fancy each man dances with each girl in the whole set before the dance is finished, thus establishing his relationship with the whole social group. Today it is quite possible for one man to dance with only one girl through a whole evening—especially at a cabaret— or at most two or three others at a private





ball to avoid talk. The dancing of a fox trot may have its own value in more closely cementing the relationship of two people, but it certainly has a very low social value. The old American country dances were truly social. During the working out of the pattern of a set, there was a complete mixing of all individuals, and if one did not know everyone before the dance started, he certainly did when it finished.

I believe there is a place in the history of dancing for the couple dance, but when social dancing has entirely degenerated into couple dancing, it is a very sad time for the art of the dance. Every age, every generation is interested in and sees only the phase of the dance which is in existence at its own time. One of the rarest things in the world is the sense of relative values and perspective. Because we are dancing a certain way today, we think that is all of dancing. It happens to be a very degenerate form of dancing that we have on our ballroom floors in this day and age. I mean degenerate not so much in the immoral sense as in the sense that the dance is not all that it is intended to mean and all that it can mean.

The wooing and courtship theme in life has its place, and a very important place, but it should not absorb all of our life. We would not get any business done, and we would not produce any works of art, and the whole machinery of life would go to smash if we were to think and revolve around the idea of love all of the time, in spite of the fact that all agree love makes the world go 'round. And so couple dancing has its place, but certainly should not absorb all of the time given to social dancing by any means.

I believe that in this factory age, when so many people are doing routine things — take as an example the workers in a Ford factory, where one man all day long does nothing but handle a certain little screw, and another man cuts out a certain piece, and an-

other man puts on a certain nut—the creative instinct is absolutely untouched. Man needs something better as a dance, to release his pent-up creative instinct than the type of dancing which we have now, grabbing some girl and walking with her around the floor to the most blatant type of music that the world has ever known.

Recent newspaper articles telling of Henry Ford encouraging the old American country dances have interested me greatly. I wonder if I will be forgiven if I take a little credit for this, since it followed our several performances to sold-out houses at Orchestra Hall in Detroit, where the Boston Fancy literally "stopped the show." At any rate it seems that Mr. Ford has brought on a New England dancing teacher and turned a floor of one of his factories into a dance hall. All his employees are privileged to learn these real social dances, which have a variety of interesting steps — not too easy to learn, with a definite and rather elaborate pattern to be worked out — and accompanied by music which has just as vital a rhythm as jazz, but with no smell of decay. Surely Mr. Ford, High Priest of Efficiency, must have become aware of the fact that "all human work, under natural conditions, is a kind of a dance," and realizing that high pressure factory work, as we know it today, is the most unnatural condition ever known, provides this missing element by giving his employees the dance itself in its undiluted form as an antidote.

A great many economic and commercial influences not at once apparent have had bearing on the ballroom dancing of the present, to its detriment.

We never have room enough to dance gracefully, freely or properly in the public dancing places. The man who is running a dance hall or a cabaret, or restaurant where there is dancing, is doing that not for his health but to make money. Therefore, it is

to his interest to get as many people on the floor as he possibly can, and the proverbial "can of sardines" is a roomy place compared to the average ballroom floor. Now a phase of the social dance, a pattern in the dance, is almost impossible under those conditions. About twelve years ago the tango came into popularity along with a general wave of excitement and interest in ballroom dancing. The tango died because it was impossible in a crowded room to do the figures of the tango. The dancers would start the rather complicated pattern, which demanded a certain number of steps in one direction and a certain number in another, and a certain number of turns, and be bumped into every other step. Finally they would give up in despair and finish the dance walking around the room. And so the tango had a very short life in America.

I think too that this thing of standardization explains some of the stupidity of our dancing. We have as people the most extraordinary self-consciousness. We hate more than anything in the world to be different. We are seeking, all of us, to make ourselves into the pattern of some uniform, composite picture of a nonexistent person we call the normal or average man. We want our clothes to look like the average man's. We want our actions to be like the average man's. We think and talk and act according to what we think is the example of this imaginary normal man. And so with ballroom dancing, anything that has quality or individuality or that stands out as being different from that very inane form of dancing becomes conspicuous, so we tone it down and do something that is very quiet and hope we will get by without anyone noticing us. Our chief aim in life is to get through without being noticed, and without being different, because of all sins in the world, being different is the worst!

There has been a great deal of talk about jazz being the American dance — that our contribution to the history of the dance is jazz,

and I greatly resent that because I think it is the line of least resistance, that it is the negative side of American life expressing itself, not the positive side.

The Europeans in their mad search for novelty are trying to find in this thing of jazz music a new art of music, and we find articles, even books on the subject. The other day I saw a book that was published in Germany, a rather weighty book, devoted to the cause of jazz, what it means to the future of art, and so on. I found in the April, 1925, American Mercury a very interesting article that made me want to cry out, "A Daniel come to Judgment." This article is by Daniel Gregory Mason and it is called Stravinsky as a Symptom. It is quite well worth reading in entirety, but I shall quote it only in part:

"The proverbial small boy's idea of Poetry is a relentless recurrence of two-syllable groups, all exactly alike:

'The boy stood on the burning deck Whence all but he had fled.'

"If the Juggernaut march of accents happens to bring a stress on an unimportant word like 'on,' so much the worse for the sense. As he grows up, however, if his feeling for rhythm develops, he may come first to perceive, then to tolerate, finally to relish verses of less mechanical inflexibility, in which vital displacements of accent are affected by important words. He may come to savor such subtle groupings as these of Masefield:

'I must go down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky, And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by; And the wheel's kick, and the wind's song and the white sail's shaking, And a grey mist on the sea's face, and a grey dawn breaking.'"

Then he says that "out of a thousand people nine hundred ninety-nine would respond to the doggerel, as against the one who would love the Masefield verse.

"That the majority of what we are pleased to call our musical public are still in this childish or savage stage of taste is shown by the popularity of jazz. Jazz is the doggerel of music. It is the singsong that the schoolboy repeats mechanically before he becomes sensitive to refined cadence. It is not, accurately speaking, rhythm at all, but only metre, a monotonous repetition of short stereotyped figures. For precisely this reason is it popular with listless, inattentive, easily distracted people, incapable of the effort required to grasp the more complex symmetries of real music. If I am so dull that I cannot recognize a rhythm unless it kicks me in the solar plexus at every other beat, my favorite music will be jazz, just as my favorite poetry will be 'The boy stood on the burning deck,' or its equivalent. If I possess, moreover, the conceit of the dull, I can easily go on to rationalize my preference into a canon of universal excellence, and affirm, as so many are now affirming, that jazz is the only music for all true one hundred per cent Americans. And if I have also the hostility of the dull to all distinction, the desire to pull everything above me down to my own dead level of mediocrity that seems to be a part of our American gregariousness, I can complete my æsthetics by 'jazzing up' whatever genuine music may happen to come my way. With Mr. Paul Whiteman in his much discussed Jazz Concert last year in Carnegie Hall, I can render Chopin indistinguishable from Gershwin, I can reduce Beethoven to terms of Irving Berlin, and like some perverse tonal Burbank, I can transform MacDowell's Wild Rose into a red cabbage.

"Of course, the propagandists of jazz are always assuring us that there is in it a new rhythm, the famous ragtime snap or jerk. Our answer must be that this novelty, such as it is, is not rhythmical, is hardly even metrical, is in fact but superficial, as if our schoolboy should whistle or squeak before each word of his droning line. Fundamentally, jazz is an insufferably mechanical two-beat

time, with a whack on the big drum for every down beat. To condemn a lover of music to sit through a concert like Mr. Whiteman's is to closet Shelley with the schoolboy for a whole evening. So arid is the sameness that even a three-beat measure of common waltz time refreshes like a spring in a desert. There are people who seem to think there is something shocking about jazz. Ah, if there only were! It is its blank featurelessness, its unrelieved tepidity, that are so pitiless. Like all primitive forms of art it is so poverty-stricken in interest for the mind (whatever its luxury of appeal to the senses through mere mass of noise or through odd effects of muted trumpets, squeaking clarinets, or flatulent trombones), that it kills its victims by sheer boredom."

He is speaking, of course, from the musician's standpoint, but the same thing is true of the dance that is true of the musician. There is no movement in jazz dancing but what exists in the dances of savage peoples. It is, therefore, not progress in any sense of the word but absolute retrogression, and I do not believe that an art can go forward by going back. It is possible that there may be some art product both in the dance and in the music of the future in which syncopation has its place, but when that art product is achieved, it will be something so very far removed from jazz as it is today that it will hardly derive even from that source. The very word "jazz" means that it is sensational, that it is tawdry and temporary, and those elements have never produced any lasting work of art.

Now as an indication of our social dancing, it is a tremendous and appalling fact that jazz has the hold on the world that it has. I believe a part of the reason is this, that in this generation following the great war, all of the old orthodoxies are not only being questioned but in a great many cases are being discarded. The younger generation is losing its reverence and respect for the church

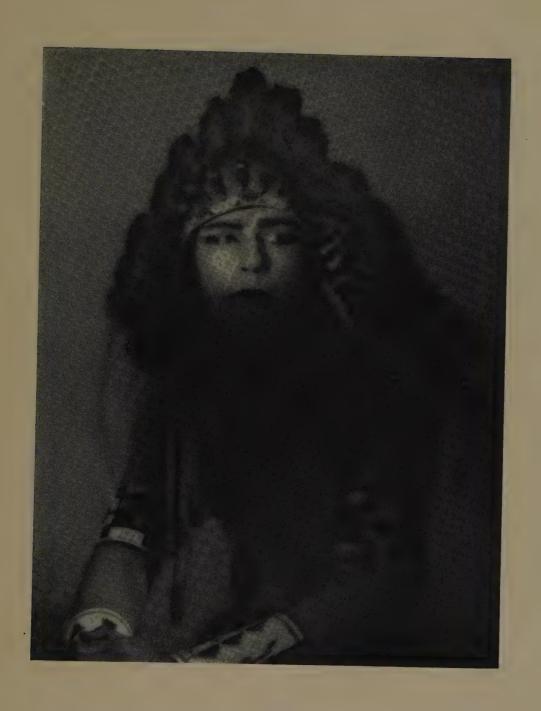
and for creeds and dogmas. There is now such a vast amount of literature attacking marriage that we are beginning to think that marriage is an obsolete form of slavery that will soon be completely done away with. This sense of having reverence for nothing, of course, penetrates the art life. We have no respect for beauty. We have no respect for the person who sacrifices a life to the production of beauty, and that spirit expresses itself through the medium of the social dance in that thing which we call jazz.

When our national consciousness is cleaned up and cleared up, we will have in our souls and hearts something that is sturdier and finer and grander, and from which we will express ourselves in a different kind of social dance. "One may judge a king," according to an old Chinese maxim, "by dancing during his reign." And we certainly know what judgment there would be passed on our own times on the basis of observing the way that we are dancing socially.

I believe that there really is a finer element active and constructive in this country whose influence and direction is toward producing the kind of an America that was conceived by the men who wrote our Constitution, and I believe that as that finer element triumphs and controls, the result of that triumph will be seen in a finer type of social dancing. This revival of interest in our own American country dances of the time of our grandmothers does not mean that we should go back and copy even the charming dances of that time, it merely acquaints us with the fact that there were and have been in the past social dance forms that are superior to those which seem to have fastened themselves upon us today, and that out of a study of these old American country dances we may get an indication of the type of social dancing which the real America should develop. Do we want to accept the dictum of the hectic Broadwayite, the denizen of the cabaret, the habitué of the

slums, the negro from the dives of southern cities, and the inhabitants of the Barbary Coast of San Francisco as our last word in the way of social dancing? Do you think that the low interpretation of those people is capable of making a dance form which will express you? Do you think that the mental and moral conditions of those people will produce a type of social dancing which will be an expression of your personality? I think you will all agree in the negative. Then what are we going to do about it? Apparently if we go to a place where there is dancing, we have only one alternative — to stand still or to dance what everyone else is dancing. But that is a negative statement. The positive answer is this: Let us put our minds on that sort of social dancing we would like to do, and then have places of our own and evolve a social dance of the better people of America. There are in existence in New York and some other cities English Folk Dance Societies that have attracted a very large following of just that sort of people — people who are repelled mentally, morally and æsthetically by all that jazz means, and have preferred to go back to the refreshing atmosphere of the Old English Folk Dances — and that type of thing gives them the rhythmic and physical recreational outlet they need. That is one step in the right direction. Henry Ford's revival of our own American country dances is also a step in the right direction. But if we are going to achieve an American social dance of today, we cannot do it by copying out of the past. Only by considering the elements of amusement and of exercise and of the need in us to create forms and patterns of beauty through the body will we achieve a new social dance of our own, truly American, of real attraction to those Americans above the grade of moron.

We must have adequate space, well ventilated, and we may even find that Saturday afternoons and Sundays will be more entertainingly and profitably spent in this new American social dance out





of doors, than in the imported golf. It will demand a new popular music—as attractive as jazz to the "jazz-hound" but more intelligently rhythmic—of greater variety, of progressively developing themes which attain culminations and lack the poison and putrefaction of jazz.

It has been argued that men who work with their brains all day find a relaxation in the utter simplicity of walking to the simple time-beat of jazz music which calls for not one single effort of intelligent thought, and that the presence of a female with magazine cover face and mental vacuum, demanding no activity of the intellect in conversation, induces a warm glow akin to that produced by several cocktails. Dancing taken thus is truly analogous to alcohol as a beverage — the search of the lazy for intoxication which they cannot produce legitimately from their own achievements.

All of the fulminations of pulpit and press against jazz dancing are futile and ridiculous. If the constructive forces of this country would only realize the eternal truth that man must and will dance, and then lend their support and sympathy to those dancers whose work and life have proven them to be "life-enhancers," we could inaugurate a type of social dancing which would replace jazz, a dance as thoroughly satisfying to the needs of adventure-seeking youth as to intelligent maturity, but a dance, rich, varied, vital and constructive, morally, mentally and physically—the dance of America's elect.



CHAPTER V AMERICAN MUSIC AND COMPOSERS



UNDAMENTALLY, the dance is an independent art, complete in itself, and needs no musical accompaniment. This principle Miss St. Denis believed nearly fifteen years ago and gave several interviews on the subject at that time, but only three or four years ago did she put it into practical expression in the form of

the silent dance on the Denishawn programs. The dance is a complete, synthetic art which embraces in itself all the other arts. The dance makes music. The dance is sculpture and painting. The dance is poetry before it is spoken. The dance is the parent of drama. In the progress of the art of the dance from its first complete condition, the dancer moved rhythmically without the accompaniment of music of any kind, before there was music. The first thing that he naturally and automatically did was to sing with his dancing. By singing, I mean he made tones with his voice which were different in vibration from those of his speaking voice, and these were in the same time as the movements that he was making with his body, so the dance created singing. Eventually other people watching him dance found themselves pounding on hollow logs with sticks, and then the drum was invented, which was probably the first musical instrument. Later they learned to make sounds by

blowing into hollow reeds, and still much later in the history of the development of the musical instrument, stringed instruments were made of catgut stretched over a hollow bowl, and another instrument which we now call a bow was drawn over this stretched string to produce a musical tone. But all of these came about as accompaniments for the dance and were offshoots of the dance. All of the possibilities of music lay within the dance at its beginning, and through a great many years the music was subordinate to the dance and used only as accompaniment. Music as a separate art developed much later and achieved its first forms and its most interesting forms out of dance rhythms.

As we come down into modern European music, music which is written down in the acknowledged style of music writing today, we find that the earliest compositions are based upon the dance. The early composers like Bach, Mozart, Haydn wrote their best compositions as gavottes, pavanes and minuets, all of which were dance forms and dance rhythms, and the themes and melodies were originally developed purely as accompaniment to actual dancing.

"The symphony is but a development of a dance suite, in the first place folk dances, such as Bach and Handel composed. Indeed a dance still lingers always at the heart of music and even the heart of the composer. Mozart, who was himself an accomplished dancer, used often to say, so his wife stated, that it was dancing, not music, that he really cared for. Wagner believed that Beethoven's Seventh Symphony — to some of us the most fascinating of them and the most purely musical — was an apotheosis of the dance, and, even if that belief throws no light on the intention of Beethoven, it is at least a revelation of Wagner's own feeling for the dance."

From The Dance of Life, by Havelock Ellis

Then through studying these rhythms and steps, they took the music written for the dance and put it into a more finished art form, and as the growth of the art of music continued, we found the tables being turned — the interest of the world lessening toward the dance and increasing toward music — and now we have in our concert field thousands of pianists, violinists and singers, but comparatively few dancers and only one or two ballets.

During that century which saw the beginning of modern music, the ballet was the center of public interest. The stars of the ballet were the great stars of the theater and idols of the public, and the singers were rather subordinate and had much less compelling personalities in every way. It was only after the ballet began to degenerate into a fixed and unprogressive system of dancing that the singers had a chance at all. At the time when the ballet became merely a conventionalized system, we find the first great personality of a singer who came out and held the public attention in the same manner that the great ballet dancers had done before. This was Jenny Lind. She began to turn the attention of the public toward the vocal instrument and was the beginning of a series of opera singers who have held the public attention ever since.

In Europe within the last twenty-five years we have seen a cycle complete itself in this way — the foremost composers of the different art producing European countries found the renaissance of the dance so interesting that they began to compose for the dance. For about a hundred years previous when a composer wrote an opera and for theatrical reasons introduced a ballet into the opera, he felt that he had to write down to the ballet. The ballet had grown so doggered that when he thought of the ballet he thought of mechanical repetitions of steps, and so for the ballet he wrote music which was on a lower order than the music of the opera. You will find in the analysis of operas that almost all com-

posers have written an inferior grade of music in the ballet part of the opera as compared to the singing and acting parts.

About twenty-five years ago, maybe twenty years ago, composers began to evince interest in the dance again, as they saw these new forms beginning to appear in the dance world. Stravinsky has written his best things for the dance, and among the other Russians were Rimsky-Korsakov, Scriabin and Tschaikowsky, who have all written definitely for the dance and in many cases have produced almost their finest compositions from the inspiration of the ballet. And so the Romantic Revolution which took flower and produced the Ballet Russe under the leadership of Diaghilew was accomplished because of the cooperation and collaboration of great composers of the day. The Diaghilew Ballet would have been considerably reduced in interest if the music had been of a low order. A great many people found quite as much interest in Stravinsky's scores as they did in the way those scores were interpreted by the dancers. And of course from a scenic standpoint, the coöperation of such artists as Bakst gave another third to the whole organization.

In America we probably suffer from the lack of music more than any other one thing—I mean music in relation to the dance. We have a great many composers. We have not yet produced a man who has been accepted by the world at large as a really colossal composer, that is to say on a scale with even the moderns of Europe, to say nothing of the old great founders of modern music. We have not produced a man who is equal to Stravinsky or Debussy, although there are a great many composer personalities entering the race. If the dance in America is going to reach the heights that it should, we must as a nation produce composers to keep pace with what we are doing in the world of the dance. There are big ideas for productions which will remain unborn until original

compositions are written for them. And some of them will never be born because we do not know the composer who can or will touch the themes.

In a résumé of American composers, one of the first names to come to my mind is that of Edward MacDowell, who, of all Americans, comes the nearest to true greatness. MacDowell, of course, is no longer living, so we cannot expect anything further from his pen. His published works which survive provide some very big and fine things, sonatas, concertos, études, that can be visualized by dancers. Another really great composer, an American, also deceased, is Charles H. Griffes. Among the musicians, I understand, he ranks almost the highest of any American composer. It was a great loss that he died when still comparatively a young man. Miss St. Denis's ballet *Ishtar*, the legend of the Babylonian Aphrodite, was accompanied by an arrangement of the works of Griffes. He composed in the so-called modern manner, with those harmonies and rhythms which are still slightly strange to our ears.

Of the living composers one of the first ones to consider is Charles Wakefield Cadman, a composer of American Indian themes. He has given a great deal of study to the subject and really knows his field. He has harmonized and developed the Indian themes according to our classic standard of what constitutes music. A great many other composers of Indian subjects and themes criticize Cadman for this very thing. They say that he has left the actual Indian themes and made his compositions too sophisticated and complicated and too musical. Be that as it may, he has written some very interesting music — an opera, Shanewis, was produced by the Metropolitan Opera Company. He has also written songs which have been sung the world over. It was my privilege to have Cadman write a ballet to my order. I provided him with the details of my Hopi Indian dance drama, and he created the score,

which was musically very well received by critics throughout the country.

Among composers of Indian themes Homer Grunn stands in my mind quite on a par with Cadman. He has not the reputation that Cadman has, but he has maintained probably more nearly the barbaric forms of the original themes. Homer Grunn composed the music for my ballet *Xochitl*, and it has certain qualities of vitality and strength and more original Indian feeling than even Cadman's music has. As I said before, there are many composers who are interested in American Indian themes, but none of them have so far produced any work which has had great national recognition. L. S. of the University of Kansas has had recognition from institutions such as the Smithsonian Institute, but he has not reached a large public as yet.

Leaving the American Indian theme and getting into the purely abstract forms of music composition, one of the foremost men of the day is Henry Hadley. Mr. Hadley is Assistant Conductor of the Philharmonic Orchestra. I have heard some of the compositions which he has written for the Bohemian Club of San Francisco, and I have heard him conduct the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra at the Bohemian Grove. Selections from his ballet Cleopatra are beautiful in the accepted European manner. He has not, as yet, branched into any creative or progressive field of music, but has been content to follow the established forms. The same is true of a great many other American composers. They are concerned in writing grand opera, concertos, sonatas and études — all of the accepted, standardized forms of music composition — and that type of musician very rarely responds to the dance as a field of composition, because he has that old European attitude of the dance that in writing for the ballet he must write for mechanical steps, four to the right and four to the left.

Eastwood Lane is one composer who has broken away from European forms and is composing music that is purely American because its inspirational idea is American, with its form following none previously established. Mr. Lane lives in New York and is manager of the Concert Department at the Wanamaker store. In the spring and summer he spends three or four months in the Adirondacks, fishing, so his music gets inspiration and color from this region and its human types. He has written a suite called Adirondack Sketches, and I have been using some of the music of his Five American Sketches. Other of his compositions are Persimmon Pucker and Knee High to a Grasshopper. His Boston Fancy was written especially for me; I brought back the pattern and rhythm and some of the simple dance themes that were played by the country fiddlers, showed him the dances, and he created music which adapted itself to the model. We are working together on a big ballet, as I have mentioned before, which deals with the legend of Paul Bunyan. Mr. Lane's point of view is absolutely American — he will go a long way in the field of American composers.

Another American composer from whom we may expect bigger things is Deems Taylor. Mr. Taylor is the music critic on a New York newspaper. He has written considerable music for various New York productions — the ballet music for Casanova, incidental music such as The Thieves' Song in Liliom, a ballet pantomime in Beggar on Horseback — and he has done things that are fresh and novel in their handling and point of view. He is not the homely type of American that Mr. Lane is, his things are more abstract but no less American.

A composer who has done some very interesting work is John Alden Carpenter, with whom, however, I have had no personal contact. He lives in Chicago and has composed for some of the ballets of Adolph Bolm, one of which is a ballet called *Krazy Kat*, based on





the comic strip of Harriman. Mr. Carpenter's music has not a great deal of appeal for me, personally, but I like the way he works. I like the freshness and novelty of his ideas and the fact of his daring to take a theme from a comic strip and to make it into a serious work of art. The word "serious" does not necessarily mean lugubrious and dull — it may be great art even though it is funny. And there are one or two other composers who have done some interesting things. Take for instance Mowry who wrote the music for Dance Americaine which I created for Charles Weidman.

Victor Herbert, in addition to his light opera genius, composed many piano pieces which it would be well for us to revive and use as material for music visualization. In the Red Man from the suite, Dwellers in the Western World, I have found an Indian composition which for popular appeal based on real intrinsic merit is without equal.

Nathaniel Dett, a negro composer, head of the Music Department of the great negro school in Virginia, Hampton Institute, is another real factor among American composers. I used his *Juba Dance* on tour four seasons ago. Mr. Dett has the deepest feeling for the dance, and in his *Enchantment Suite* has shown rich imagination, romance, color, mystery and primitive passion.

R. S. Stoughton of Worcester, Massachusetts, achieved his first reputation as a composer for the organ. His East Indian Suite, Persian Suite and Egyptian Suite are known, loved and played by organists all over the world. It was one number from the East Indian Suite which Miss St. Denis chose for her Dance of the Black and Gold Sari and later Stoughton wrote especially for her the score for The Spirit of the Sea and for our Algerian ballet The Vision of the Aissoua. His feeling for Oriental rhythms and strange harmonies is unequalled by any modern composer, and his exquisite and poignant melodies linger in one's memory for years.

The campaign managers of the "Jazz-the-Great-American-Art-Form" movement seem to be greatly excited over George Gershwin. His chief claim to serious consideration lies in his Rhapsody in Blue, played at the much discussed "concert" of Paul Whiteman. I am not enough of a musician to give any expert opinion — in spots it sounded very jazzy to me, and those spots I cared no more for than the trash he has written for Lady Be Good. Other portions had a certain approach to symphonic standards — and these were more pleasant to my ears. He may be one of the milestones in the progress of modern music, but if a great new music form is to come out of jazz, it will have to come so far out that it will have very little in common with what we know as jazz today.

I believe if a composer really composes for the dance he should study with dancers, live and work with them, and learn the principles of the dance from the ground up. He should learn the human body and the possibilities that are within the body and then forget the limitations of the established forms of music writing. All of the technique and all of the knowledge that they may have learned in their periods of study and periods of apprenticeship, and even in their best compositions, should be put to the service of tonalizing forms which the dancer creates unimpeded by music. If we could take a group of dancers and create what we call a silent dance where the rhythms are the rhythms of their own bodies, there would be a continuous unfolding of new forms.

And here is where the dance, left to itself, diverges from classic music forms. The sonata form has a theme, then a development of that theme, next a counter-theme and a development of the counter-theme, then a return to the original theme and its development. The dance, which is another name for life, does not go back and repeat. In life we do not live our childhood, then our adolescence, and then go back to repeat our childhood, nor in the dance should

we — for it is continuously unfolding and the new music must adapt itself to this instructive pattern of great dancing. An American composer, himself sensitive, sympathetic and of big caliber, working thus from the fundamental of the dance, can produce new music forms as epoch-making as those of Beethoven.

At the time of the first pioneering of Duncan and St. Denis, the ballet was still pirouetting to the doggerel rhythms of the opera ballet music and dance compositions on that level. These Americans claimed that the bigness of their concept of the dance demanded as accompaniment the most profound music of which the greatest composers were capable. When Miss Duncan danced to the Andante of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, the musicians cried "Sacrilege," but she was right. For the dancing of the truly great dancers there is no music that is not inadequate tonalization of the divine movements of the human body. Havelock Ellis says in Impressions and Comments: "Rightly considered, the whole body is a dance. It is forever instinctive harmonious movement, at every point exalted to unstained beauty, because at every moment it is the outcome of vital expression that springs from its core and is related to the meaning of the whole. In our blind folly we have hidden the body. We have denied its purity. We have ignored its vital significance."

There is an infinite complexity of rhythms in the human body. Delsarte says that each bone, being of a different length and weight, has a different rhythm. So the composer should study the body to become aware of the music which really emanates from the symphony of its many harmoniously adjusted parts.

I believe that in creating a really great American Ballet, we will have to have the most sensitive and thorough coöperation of the greatest composers that we are capable of producing, in spirit as well as in technique, and in actual application.

I have this theme of a great ballet to be based upon the Leaves

of Grass of Walt Whitman, and as I think of this poem and work on it, ponder, meditate, read and re-read its colossal lines, I realize the ballet must be one of two things. It must be a silent dance, or there must appear a Titan in the American music world to handle adequately the vastness of the Walt Whitman concept. I believe that the America which has produced a Walt Whitman can and will produce the composer who will put into tonal form the same cosmic consciousness that Whitman put into poetry, and it is my constant and sincere prayer that my own consciousness be expanded to the point that I may be a Whitman of the dance.



CHAPTER VI DANCING AND NUDITY

If anything is sacred the human body is sacred,
And the glory and sweet of a man is the token of manhood untainted,
And in man or woman a clean, strong, firm-fibred body, is more beautiful than
the most beautiful face.

WALT WHITMAN



ROM a metaphysical standpoint, Man is Idea, Man is a symbol. When we speak of a man, we speak of some particular human being whom we happen to know, but when we speak of Man, generically, we speak of an Idea that has neither time, place, race nor other classification. There is no way of repre-

senting invisible form, the idea of Man, except by the nude human body. We cannot associate the cosmic Man with clothes, because clothing suggests classification — clothes would place him as to race, nationality, period of history, social or financial status—and Man would become a man.

Artists all over the world and throughout all time, when they have sought to embody their highest ideals or greatest ideas in art, have presented those ideals or ideas through the noblest and most beautiful naked human body they were capable of conceiving. And so when the creative artist dancer thinks his biggest thoughts, he instinctively seeks to dance nude. His abstract ideas, his cosmic

emotions, his concepts that are not bounded by time or space, all demand nakedness as a medium of expression.

The painter paints a nude body, and we are able (some of us) to see the canvas as an æsthetic object, a representation of an idea, a thing of beauty; the sculptor models a beautiful body in clay, and it is done into marble or bronze; it becomes a part of a building as decoration, or stands alone on its pedestal in a great gallery. Again we admire and pay homage to an expression of beauty, and the visible form of a great artist's aspiration after perfection. But when we see the actual nudity of a living person, as in dancing, we are presented with a much more complex problem, and one which more obviously involves the question of motive. I say obviously because, in reality, purity and loftiness of motive are just as essential in the graphic and plastic arts as in dancing; yet a painter or sculptor may fix in immortal form a mood of exaltation, and never again reach that height, while the dancer reveals at the moment of each performance the quality of his consciousness, so that it behooves him to keep it always fine.

From a purely mechanical and practical standpoint, the dancer needs the utmost freedom from clothes in his finest work. To ask a dancer always to wear some garment is like asking a singer always to keep a veil over her mouth, even though it be only a gauze scarf. The entire body is the organ of expression of the dancer, and the ideal condition is to have it utterly free and unconfined.

There is, however, the question of artistic fitness. If the dancer is representing a nationality, or a period of history, in the dance forms of that people or time, he most certainly will wear the costume that belongs to the idea. It would be just as foolish to dance a minuet nude as it is to do a Greek dance in pink tights and ballet slippers. And to perform a dance of ancient Greece in pink tights and ballet slippers is really immoral, for it is an offense

to beauty, to fitness and to common sense — and perilously close to the comic.

Our greatest drawback to dancing in the nude is, of course, public opinion, bulwarked as it is by a tradition of centuries which has looked upon the human body as something wicked, sinful, shameful and obscene. There have been, as we all know, civilizations in the world's history, wherein the people revered and worshipped the naked human body as being the greatest revelation which deity has made to us of perfection, of wonder and of beauty.

It is almost unanimously conceded that human culture reached the highest point in history during what is called the Golden Age of the Greeks. Within a period of a few hundred years, in a community numbering only a few hundred thousands, a large percentage of the total contribution to human knowledge and beauty was made by a people who believed in and practiced nudity. There is no art or science today which does not owe something to the Greek civilization; all philosophy begins with Pythagoras, Socrates and Plato; the drama of today through all the world saw its beginnings in Greece, first in the dances of those people, which developed into the great tragedies later; the science of medicine saw its start in Greece; no example of architecture in the world has surpassed in nobility and beauty the Parthenon at Athens. These things all proceeded out of a consciousness which was noble, fine, far-seeing, vigorous, vital, wholesome. And they looked upon the naked body as truly the "Temple of the Living God." Their great motto was "A sane mind in a sound body." They realized that the complete man was the only worth while goal, that the brilliant brain in a diseased or deformed body was half a man, just as the athlete, uncultured and unlearned, was half a man. They spoke of the Persians, their neighbors and their historic enemy, as "those barbarians who cover up their bodies." Great men - philosophers, states-

men and artists — found it not beneath their dignity to dance before huge concourses of people, and we read of "the young Sophocles who danced, naked and unashamed," before the victors of the battle of Marathon.

They were surrounded by the beauty of nature, and by the beauty created by man's hands, but most of all they worshipped the beauty that was in man himself. They realized that the most beautiful object in all the world is a perfect man or a perfect woman, and they believed that this beauty should not be hidden, but revealed proudly to the world. As no effect can produce a cause, we must argue the other way around. The Greeks were a divinely naked people, because of the extraordinary purity of their concept of body. They had always a respect for their body and felt that it was a sacred thing, never to be defamed or misused or debauched. Because of that state of mind, their nakedness was a wholesome and natural condition.

Winckelmann, who was, according to Walter Pater, the fore-runner of Goethe in bringing the renaissance of classic arts to Germany, wrote as follows: "By no people has beauty been so highly esteemed as by the Greeks. The priests were always youths to whom the prize of beauty had been awarded. And as beauty was so longed for and prized by the Greeks, every beautiful person sought to become known to the whole people by this distinction, and, above all, to approve himself to the artists, because they awarded the prize; and this was for the artists an opportunity of having supreme beauty ever before their eyes. Beauty even gave a right to fame, and we find in Greek histories the most beautiful people distinguished. It seems even to have been thought that the procreation of beautiful children might be promoted by prizes. This is shown by the existence of contests for beauty in which a







prize was offered to the youths for the deftest kiss. The general esteem for beauty went so far that the Spartan women set up in their bed chambers a Nireus, a Narcissus or a Hyacinth that they might bear beautiful children."

I do not advise a sudden and promiscuous nudity for everyone today. This jazz civilization, this Broadway state of mind, is not worthy of nudity. If we had in us the "glory that was Greece," then we would naturally live and have our being in unadorned and divine beauty. But a great cleaning up of our national and racial consciousness must be achieved before we can go naked divinely. The American dancer has begun this education of the public point of view.

Consider again the pioneering of Ruth St. Denis and Isadora Duncan. At the time of their advent, the clothes of the American and European world were at almost the lowest ebb of stupidity and ugliness. Every woman wore dresses which trailed the ground and swept up all the dirt of the streets. She wore that relic of barbarism, the corset, and I remember one music-hall celebrity who boasted of a nine-inch waist. Great wads of dead hair stuffed into her own made monstrosities called "pompadours," and she teetered on stilts which went by the euphemism of "French heels." Today the corset is gone, the pompadour with its "rat" is gone, the single slip and silk knickers underneath, which make the modern girl's dress, can be compressed into her vanity box; she rolls her stockings and reveals her bare knees, and in many cases wears good-looking, low-heeled, roomy shoes.

When Miss Duncan and Miss St. Denis first appeared, rebelling against the atrocities then worn in the shape of body-covering, and reverted to the simple drapery of the Greeks, or the scant garb of the Orient, there was a universal gasp of shocked amazement. Miss St. Denis presented as her first great offering Radha, The Mystic

Dance of the Five Senses, a Hindu Temple Dance. She had studied for years the literature, religion and art forms of India, through books, pictures, art museums, libraries, and through scholars versed in East Indian lore. Her stage setting was authentic, her costumes true in detail, her music, lighting effects, and dancing all combined to give a synthetic presentation for the first time in this age. It was also, in its theme, the first presentation of a definite religious idea in dance form that this day and generation had ever seen. But the reporters and reviewers saw none of this. They rushed back to their various journals to scream in large, black-faced type, "She has bare feet!"

In going over the scrapbooks of the first ten years of Miss St. Denis's career, I find the press was almost exclusively concerned with the number of inches of exposed epidermis. It is only in late years that we have received real criticism upon our performances — upon the art content rather than upon the nudity. (And even so, let me add, there are yet no dance critics. We have music critics and dramatic critics, each of whom reviews a dance performance from his own angle, but it is not yet intelligently criticized from the dancer's point of view.)

Times have changed. To the public and press, like the bus driver of the funny story, legs are no longer a luxury. This is a direct result of the performances first of Miss St. Denis and Miss Duncan, and then within the last eleven years of the Denishawn dancers. Previous to the contact with Miss Duncan, the Russian ballet had never used bare feet, contenting themselves with the tights and ballet slippers; even now they find themselves more at home in that type of dance and costume.

No one has researched so deeply and with such consecration into the subject of nakedness, its moral and educational value to humanity, as Havelock Ellis. His great scientific work, *Studies in*

the Psychology of Sex, is the work of a much needed messiah. In the sixth volume of that series is a chapter, Sexual Education and Nakedness, from which I quote as follows:

"Children cannot be too early familiarized with the representations of the nude in ancient sculpture and in the paintings of the old masters of the Italian school. In this way they may be immunized, as Enderlin expresses it, against those representations of the nude which make an appeal to the baser instincts. Early familiarity with nudity in art is at the same time an aid to the attainment of a proper attitude towards purity in nature. 'He who has once learnt,' as Holler remarks, 'to enjoy peacefully nakedness in art, will be able to look on nakedness in nature as on a work of art.'

"Casts of classic nude statues and reproductions of the pictures of the old Venetian and other Italian masters may fittingly be used to adorn schoolrooms, not so much as objects of instruction as things of beauty with which the child cannot too early become familiarized. In Italy it is said to be usual for school classes to be taken by their teachers to the art museums with good results; such visits form part of the official scheme of education.

"There can be no doubt that such early familiarity with the beauty of nudity in classic art is widely needed among all social classes and in many countries. It is to this defect in our education that we must attribute the occasional, and indeed in America and England frequent, occurrence of such incidents as petitions and protests against the exhibition of nude statuary in art museums, the display of pictures so inoffensive as Leighton's Bath of Psyche in shop windows, and the demand for draping of the naked personifications of abstract virtues in architectural street decoration.

"So imperfect is still the education of the multitude that in these matters the ill-bred fanatic of prurience usually gains his will. Such a state of things cannot but have an unwholesome reaction

on the moral atmosphere of the community in which it is possible. Even from the religious point of view, prurient prudery is not justifiable. Northcote has very temperately and sensibly discussed the question of the nude in art from the standpoint of Christian morality. He points out that 'not only is the nude in art not to be condemned without qualification,' and that 'the nude is by no means necessarily the erotic,' but he also adds that 'even erotic art, in its best and purest manifestations, only arouses emotions that are the legitimate object of man's aspirations. It would be impossible even to represent biblical stories adequately on canvas or in marble if erotic art were to be tabooed.' (Rev. H. Northcote, Christianity and Sex Problems, Ch. xiv.)

"In Sparta, in Chios, and elsewhere in Greece, women at one time practiced gymnastic feats and dances in nakedness, together with the men, or in their presence. Plato in his *Republic* approved of such customs and said that the ridicule of those who laughed at them was but 'unripe fruit plucked from the tree of knowledge.' On many questions Plato's opinions changed, but not on this.

"In the Laws, which are the last outcome of his philosophic reflection in old age, he still advocated (Bk. viii) a similar coeducation of the sexes and their coöperation in all the works of life, in part with a view to blunt the over keen edge of sexual appetite; with the same object he advocated the association together of youths and girls without constraint in costumes which offered no concealment to the form.

"Christianity, which found so many of Plato's opinions congenial, would have nothing to do with his view of nakedness and failed to recognize its psychological correctness. The reason was simple, and indeed simple-minded. The Church was passionately eager to fight against what it called 'the flesh,' and thus fell into the error of confusing the subjective question of sexual desire with

the objective spectacle of the naked form. 'The flesh' is evil; therefore 'the flesh' must be hidden. And they hid it, without understanding that in so doing they had not suppressed the craving for the human form, but, on the contrary, had heightened it by imparting to it the additional fascination of a forbidden mystery.

"There ought to be no question regarding the fact that it is the adorned, the partially concealed body, and not the absolutely naked body, which acts as a sexual excitant. I have brought together some evidence on this point in the study of The Evolution of Modesty. 'In Madagascar, West Africa, and the Cape,' says G. F. Scott Elliott (A Naturalist in Mid-Africa, p. 36), 'I have always found the same rule. Chastity varies inversely as the amount of clothing.' It is now indeed generally held that one of the chief primary objects of ornament and clothing was the stimulation of sexual desire, and artists' models are well aware that when they are completely unclothed they are most safe from undesired masculine advances. 'A favorite of mine told me,' remarks Dr. Shufeldt, the distinguished author of Studies of the Human Form (Medical Brief, October 1904), 'that it was her practice to disrobe as soon after entering the artist's studio as possible, for as men are not always responsible for their emotions, she felt that she was far less likely to arouse or excite them when entirely nude than when only semi-draped.' If the conquest of sexual desire were the first and last consideration of life, it would be more reasonable to prohibit clothing than to prohibit nakedness."

Ellis, in his Impressions and Comments (First Series), writes in like vein: "Gaby Deslys is just now a great attraction at the Palace Theatre (London). One is amused to note how this very Parisian person and her very Parisian performance are with infinite care adapted to English needs, and attuned to this comfortably respectable, not to say stolidly luxurious, house. We are shown a bedroom

with a bed in it, and a little dressing-room by the side. Her task is to undress and go to bed. It is the sort of scene that may be seen in any music-hall all over Europe. But in the capital city of British propriety, and in a music-hall patronised by Royalty, this delicate task is surrounded and safeguarded by infinite precautions. One seems to detect that the scene has been rehearsed before a committee of ambiguously mixed composition. One sees the care with which they determined the precise moment at which the electric light should be switched off in the dressing-room; one realizes their firm decision that the lady must, after all, go to bed fully clothed. One is conscious throughout of a careful anxiety that every avenue to 'suggestiveness' shall just be hinted and at once decently veiled. There is something unpleasant, painful, degrading in this ingenious mingling of prurience and prudery. The spectators, if they think of it at all, must realize that throughout the whole trivial performance their emotions are being basely played upon, and yet they are being treated with an insulting precaution which would be more in place in a lunatic asylum than in a gathering of presumably responsible men and women. In the end one is made to feel how far more purifying and ennobling than this is the spectacle of absolute nakedness, even on the stage, yes, even on the stage.

"And my thoughts go back to the day, less than two years ago, when for the first time this was clearly brought home to me by a performance — like this and yet so unlike — in a very different place, the simple, bare, almost sordid Teatro Gayarre. Most of the turns were of the same ordinary sort that might be seen in many another music-hall of the long Calle Marques del Duero. But at the end came on a performer who was, I soon found, of altogether another order. The famous Bianca Stella, as the programme announced, shortly to start on her South American tour, was appearing for a limited number of nights. I had never heard of Bianca

Stella. To look at she might be Austrian, and one could imagine, from some of her methods, that she was a pupil of Isadora Duncan. She was certainly a highly trained and accomplished artist; though peculiarly fitted for her art by Nature, still an artist, not a child of Nature.

"Of fine and high type, tall and rather slim, attractive in face, almost faultless in proportion and detail, playing her difficult part with unfailing dignity and grace, Bianca Stella seemed in general type a Bohemian out of Stratz's Schönheit des weiblichen Körpers, or even an aristocratic young Englishwoman. She comes on fully dressed, like Gaby Deslys, but with no such luxurious environment, and slowly disrobes, dancing all the while, one delicate garment at a time, until only a gauzy chemise is left and she flings herself on the bed. Then she rises, fastens on a black mantel which floats behind concealing nothing, at the same moment removing her chemise. There is now no concealment left save by a little close fitting triangular shield of spangled silver, as large as the palm of her hand, fastened around her waist by an almost invisible cord, and she dances again with her beautiful, dignified air. Once more, this time in the afternoon, I went to see Bianca Stella dance. Now there was a dark curtain as a background. She comes on with a piece of simple white drapery wound round her body; as she dances she unfolds it, holds it, finally flings it away, dancing with her fleckless and delicately proportioned body before the dark curtain. Throughout the dances her dignity and grace, untouched by voluptuous appeal and yet always human, remained unfailing. Other dancers who came on before her, clothed dancers, had been petulantly wanton to their heart's desire. Bianca Stella seemed to belong to another world. As she danced, when I noted the spectators, I could see here and there a gleam in the eyes of coarse faces, though there was no slightest movement or gesture or look of the dancer

to evoke it. For these men Bianca Stella had danced in vain, for it remains symbolically true — only the pure in heart can see God. To see Bianca Stella was to realize that it is not desire but a sacred awe which nakedness inspires, an intoxication of the spirit rather than of the senses, no flame of lust but rather a purifying and exalting fire. To feel otherwise has merely been the unhappy privilege of men intoxicated by the stifling and unwholesome air of modern artificiality. To the natural man, always and everywhere, even today, nakedness has in it a power of divine terror, which ancient men throughout the world crystallized into beautirites, so that when a woman unveiled herself it seemed to them that thunderstorms were silenced, and that noxious animals were killed, and that vegetation flourished, and that all the powers of evil were put to flight. That was their feeling, and, absurd as it may seem to us, a right and natural instinct lay beneath it. Some day, perhaps, a new moral reformer, a great apostle of purity, will appear among us, having his scourge in his hand and enter our theatres and musichalls to purge them. Since I have seen Bianca Stella, I know something of what he will do. It is not nakedness that he will cast out. It will more likely be clothes.

"So, when I contemplate Gaby Deslys or her sort, it is of Bianca Stella that I think.

"We need today a great revival of the sense of responsibility not only in the soul but in the body. We want a new sort of esprit de corps. We need it especially for women, for women, under modern conditions, even less than men, have no use for sagging bodies or sagging souls. It is only by the sanction of nakedness that this can be achieved. 'Take this hint from the dancer,' a distinguished American dancer has said, 'the fewer clothes the better; woman is clumsy because she is overweighted with clothes.' With whatever terror we may view any general claim to the right of nakedness, the







mere liability to nakedness, the mere freedom to be naked, at once introduces a new motive into life. It becomes a moralizing force of the most strenuous urgency. Clothes can no more be put before us as a substitute for the person. The dressmaker can no longer arrogate the function of a Creator. The way is opened for the appearance in civilization of a real human race.

"Rightly considered, the whole body is a dance. It is forever in instinctive harmonious movement, at every point exalted to unstained beauty, because at every moment it is the outcome of vital expression that springs from its core and is related to the meaning of the whole. In our blind folly we have hidden the body. We have denied its purity. We have ignored its vital significance."

Some years ago when Robert Henri, the great American painter, was painting the portrait of Miss St. Denis in her Peacock Dance, I visited the studio during the sittings and had some interesting chats with Mr. Henri. One day the conversation ran upon nudity, and the painter said, "If I were endowed with the Dictatorship of the world, with power to enact laws and enforce them, the first law that I would enact would be this: that for one hour, once a year, each person would be compelled to stand in some public place, completely naked, to be viewed by all the passing world." At first, the idea stunned me, but then I realized that no one single law could be enacted which would be of such inestimable benefit to the human race. We would no longer allow our dressmakers and tailors, as Havelock Ellis says, to "arrogate the function of the Creator." The banker with his huge paunch, looking ahead at the day a year hence when he would be on view naked, would hie him to the physical trainer and get in condition. The clerk, looking at his spindle-shanks, would join the Y. M. C. A., and begin to develop some muscle; thus we would build up a physically more perfect race, and the reaction on the mind and spirits would be for robust-

ness and wholesomeness of the inner man. Nor will dissipation, effects of sin, and debauchery be hidden from the world. Again listen to Walt Whitman:

"Have you seen the fool that corrupted his own live body? or the fool that corrupted her own live body?

For they do not conceal themselves, they cannot conceal themselves."

If we had nakedness, or even a period of nakedness in each year, we could not corrupt our bodies, our pride would not let us; we could not drink to excess, we could not be gluttons, we could not be lazy and let our bodies atrophy, nor unduly dissipate our forces. We would have to present strength, healthy beauty, proportion and symmetry to the world, for the ability to buy a Paquin gown, or pay the bill of a Fifth Avenue tailor would be of no avail to us then.

About 1917, just before I went into the army, I gave an interview to some reporter for a newspaper syndicate. The conversation was general, but during the talk I said, "Within ten years I will be able to dance completely nude, so far as the canons of art permit (which in case of a living man would require a fig leaf), and totally without offense to the audience witnessing that dance." The reporter, in the usual journalistic style, made his whole story around this sentence. Had I planned to put a bomb under the White House, or import opium and give it free to school children, I could not have been viewed with such disfavor as came on the heels of this syndicated story. Preachers used it as a spring board from which to dive into sermons depicting the degeneracy of our times, editorial writers fulminated or ridiculed, and my mail was deluged with vitriolic abuse for months.

In the summer of 1923, about six or seven years after my prophecy, I saw it fulfilled. Having returned from a trip abroad, saturated with the beauty of the old-world galleries, the Prado, the Museo Nationale, the Pitti Palace, the Uffizi, the Louvre, the British

Museum, I had to do something about it. I set about putting some of the impressions I had absorbed from the sculpture of these treasure houses of antique beauty into a dance. Fearfully, I trod with careful steps to avoid making a dance that in any way resembled the "living statue" acts of vaudeville, putting the emphasis rather on plastic movement than on static posture. This dance (in which I literally wore nothing but a white wig and a fig leaf) when completed was first offered to an invited audience of about six hundred people representing the brains and blood of New England, and the response of those people remains a treasured memory which shall last as long as life itself. Last season (1924-1925) I took this dance on tour as a part of our regular program, and offered it to one hundred and fifty cities of America and Canada, New England villages, North Dakota and Montana towns, New Mexico, Arizona and Oklahoma frontier communities, as well as the big cities and cultural centers of our country, and never once did it receive anything but warm and enthusiastic response from the audience, and intelligent, favorable comment from the press.

Albert Edward Wiggam's New Decalogue of Science made a great impression upon me when I first read it, and the tenth re-reading finds it as inexhaustible of interest and stimulus. In it he writes:

"Men do tend strongly to marry the women of their dreams. Whether those dreams be dreams of beauty or ugliness, intelligence or stupidity, determines the type of women and consequently the children that will people a nation. And the character of a man's dreams is largely influenced by the creations of the artist. Beauty is the physiological basis of all that evolution has thought worth preserving. It is often said that beauty is only skin deep. It is as deep as protoplasm, as inherent as intellect, as vital as character. In the large it is woven into the protoplasmic fabric of the race with all that is admirable and excellent. It is correlated with intel-

ligence and refinement of soul. It is the one sure germinal basis of great racial stock. It blooms instantly where given a happy soil and a congenial air. Every period when men have turned their minds to culture and things of the spirit, beauty, intelligence and character have all flowered together with exquisite fragrance. Every high period of human splendor has been characterized by beautiful, intelligent and noble men and women. Beauty bloomed all through feudalism and chivalry. It was associated with all which meant character and intelligence. It remains to be seen if democracy will make men and women beautiful or ugly. If it fails to make them beautiful and keep them so, it will fail to produce intelligence and character. Unless our vocational and humanistic education can rush to the rescue and make beauty of body and mind the very atmosphere amid which men live, then democracy, ugliness and stupidity will all become synonymous terms."

In the spring of 1925 I had a long talk with Mr. Wiggam, who had seen the Denishawn performances a few weeks previously at Carnegie Hall. He agreed with me that the presenting of beautiful nude bodies, strong, healthy and moving rhythmically, intelligently and expressively, would present ideals to the minds of the youth of this nation which would tend to make them select their mates nearer to this ideal, thus vastly improving the race in future generations.

There is a power in beauty that is like the sun — it works its way quietly and gently, but its effects are greater than many more blustering and obvious claims to strength. As a nation, we Americans fear and despise beauty. The Puritan type of mind, which produced its arch type in the late Anthony Comstock, found beauty and sin almost synonymous. His influence and that of his kind was and is of incalculable harm to our whole race. Our progress depends upon ideals of beauty. It has been stated that the influence of Italian Renaissance painters, constantly producing pictures of

ideal beauty stimulated by their newly awakened worship of ancient Greek art, actually changed and beautified the whole Italian people, and was a real civilizing force.

There is no doubt that we are affected by that which is constantly before our eyes. The most universal art today is that of the stage and screen. In the hands of dramatic and moving-picture producers lies a tool of untold power for good or evil. I believe that the presenting on stage and screen of supreme examples of human beauty is good, for from the stage more than any other source mankind gets it dream-ideals.

The greatest animosity of the Puritan censor has been against nudity. There are still cities, such as Providence, Rhode Island, and Little Rock, Arkansas, where Miss St. Denis and I cannot appear with our company unless we promise to cover our bodies completely. Of course, we do not dance in these cities. It is still a common and widespread belief that nudity is shameful and that there is something inherently vile in a naked body. Anyone who has sincerely and without prejudice thought this matter out to a conclusion knows how false this is. The only thing that it is shameful to expose is ugliness. To look at a nude woman whose breasts are flabby and discolored, whose body is gross and fat, produces only nausea and disgust. To see the naked body of one who is healthy, strong, symmetrical and of noble proportion is to experience a sense of divine revelation, and one is moved to something akin to exaltation.

But we must not confuse beauty with mere prettiness. The trouble with the nudity in most of the revues is not vulgarity but shallowness. The girl displayed is the vacuous, magazine-cover type, and as such presents a trivial ideal of womanhood. But even so, nudity, it is beginning to be generally admitted, is not nearly so suggestive as diabolically designed costumes. And the "human

chandeliers" and "living curtains" produce much less sexual excitement than the cleverly arranged concealing-and-displaying costumes of the jazzing chorus. (Not that I myself believe sexual stimulus from the stage to be wrong — I do not. But it is the quality of the image and ideal stamped upon the consciousness of the beholder at such times that strikes me as being of utmost importance.)

In my various visits to Paris I have done the thing that every other American does, that is, I visited the Folies Bergère, and other revues of that type, where women are paraded quite naked before a rather bored audience. The motive in these instances is frankly a sensual motive. There is no attempt to camouflage this motive, and the result, as far as beauty is concerned, is almost utter negation. These women may have bodies whose proportions are nearly perfect, but the quality of thought which has brought about their condition of nakedness, showing in a vapid animality of facial expression, is on so low a scale that there is no illusion of beauty; and strangely enough, the nakedness almost defeats the purpose for which it is designed in these revues. In the audiences which I have witnessed, I have not perceived in any face a response of excitement, or a single quickened breath.

The artist dancer on the other hand gains an impersonal view-point about her body, and uses it exactly as the sculptor uses his clay, and the painter his brushes, paints and canvas — it is the material with which she presents a succession of pictures, the total of which is the expression of some message of her soul. She is aware of the value of this instrument or material, that it must be as beautiful in proportion and movement as she can make it, but having developed it by exercises to the best of her ability, she forgets it as a thing in itself and considers it merely as a means to an end, and the end is a gesture of Truth and Beauty.

In our studios, the laboratory and workshop of the dance, we





work in one-piece bathing suits of light-weight silk, boys and girls together, and it is an atmosphere of mental concentration, of hard physical work, and of a unifying agreement to a principle of art. The rare visitors to our classes (for I do not allow idle curiosity satisfiers, only those who are worth while and have a real purpose) have unanimously exclaimed at the moral atmosphere of the school. Recently, a woman of social position, intelligence and old family traditions, conventional to the last degree, visited Denishawn. At first her facial expression was as of one who had stepped into the cool surf; gradually she relaxed, then expanded, and after ten minutes of watching these radiant and almost naked boys and girls move rhythmically and beautifully, with an absorption of attention on their work which precluded any thought of body other than its use in the dance, she turned to me and said: "Why do any of us ever wear clothes?" Here was a real conversion!

If more and more, children could from infancy be brought up familiar with nakedness, in themselves, in their parents, in their brothers and sisters and playmates! If they could grow up and never hear one word spoken that was derogatory to the body, never one suggestion that there was anything shameful, nasty or immodest about the body! Let them think of clothes as something for covering against weather, or for the practical uses of travel and occupation, but not as a necessity from a standpoint of modesty! For you cannot implant in a child's mind a thought that his body is obscene and expect any other result than sin, disease and deformity from this seed.

With this attitude of mind, freed from the necessity of covering the body from any sense of modesty, we would achieve again real beauty of clothes, for they would be used as the Greeks used them, as decorative drapery, an extension of the beauty of the lines of the body.

That America as a whole is getting a more wholesome and sen-

sible attitude about nudity is a fact, and that the American dance artists have largely produced this result is also true. It therefore is put upon us as another charge that we always be sensitive to the prime motive in our dancing in nudity.

We must always work outward from a centre, which being clean, constructive and vital in quality chooses subject matter that is universal, abstract and cosmic in theme, and thus finds its only adequate medium the nude body. And when, in the roundness of the dance art, we choose to put our ideas through the form of a period or race, let us always costume that dance fittingly, even if adapted and changed to serve better the ends of beauty.

There will be another and greater opposition to nudity than that of the Comstocks of life, and that is the opposition of the clothing manufacturers. I quote from Edward Carpenter's Pagan and Christian Creeds. "No sensible person would advocate promiscuous nakedness any more than promiscuous sex-relationship; nor is it likely that aged and deformed people would at any time wish to expose themselves. But surely there is enough good sense and appreciation of grace and fitness in the average human mind for it to be able to liberate the body from senseless concealment, and give it its due expression. The Greeks of old, having on the whole clean bodies, treated them with respect and distinction. The young men appeared quite naked in the Palaestra, and even the girls of Sparta ran races publicly in the same condition, and some day when our bodies (and minds too) have become clean we shall return to similar institutions. But that will not be just yet. As long as the defilement of this commercial civilization is on us we shall prefer our dirt and concealment. The powers that be will protest against change. Heinrich Menschen, in his charming little pamphlet Nackende Menschen, describes the consternation of the commerical people at such ideas;

"'What will become of us,' cried the tailors, 'if you go naked?'

"And all the lot of them, hat, cravat, shirt, and shoemakers joined in the chorus.

"'And where shall I carry my money?' cried one who had just been made a director."

At present, our marvelous means of machine production, rapid transit and far-flung instant communication, are tools whose brightness and sharpness we admire but do not know how to use, or worse, tools with which we harm ourselves. If we could engender a national worship of the divine beauty of the naked body and desire for beauty of person, there would come about in America a flower of civilization superior even to that of ancient Greece. For added to the worship and expression of beauty, we would have the commercial organization, mechanical efficiency and inventive genius, which are at present our only achievements and boasts, to turn to the service of beauty. These developments of a mechanical-scientific age could be subordinated to the use of securing individual joy, freedom and expansion of consciousness.



CHAPTER VII DANCING FOR MEN



LBERT EDWARD WIGGAM, in the conversation previously referred to, said that any idea which found general and popular acceptance was *ipso facto* a fallacy. Certainly the idea that dancing is a feminine accomplishment and a career for women only has that sort of hold on the public mind today, and is decidedly

a fallacy that must be exploded.

For years this saying has influenced my mind and life: "The most valuable possession a man can have is a sense of relative values and perspective." I do not know the particular source of this statement; it has probably been expressed in various ways by many philosophers. But as each year passes, I become more aware of its profound truth. Particularly in regard to the whole subject of the dance, the world today lacks perspective. People have a near-sighted view of almost all of the facts of life, both big and little. Take, for example, the subject of clothes; most of us seem to believe that this "series of cylinders" we wear was divinely ordained. If you were to wear a Greek tunic down Fifth Avenue, or even the garb of an Eskimo, you would be arrested for stopping traffic, or on some such charge. Anyone who wears clothes violently different from the herd is looked upon as a public menace.





And the public today narrows its gaze upon the subject of the dance in the same manner. Thus the dance becomes to them a rather trivial, not to say inelegant, form of pastime, engaged in by couples; or else a none too elevating form of theatrical entertainment consisting of stunts performed by vaudeville "artists." This public astigmatism in regard to the dance affects their attitude, obviously, in thinking of dancing as a career; it is viewed with disfavor for a girl, and for a boy it is unspeakable. Considering this point of view, it is understandable that a father would not want his son to spend the rest of his life doing soft-shoe dancing in vaudeville. There must be an entire change of the public consciousness, and a greater education and enlightenment in regard to the infinite possibilities of the art of the dance before we will find parents aiding and abetting a son to become a dancer.

In my own case, when I first crystallized upon dancing as my life work, I met, of course, with the usual opposition from nearly everyone. I had the religious opposition from the minister and friends of my church, who, being Methodists, thought that dancing in itself was sinful; I had the opposition of my family who felt that this choice of a career did not promise solid financial standing for my adult years; and particularly I had the opposition of my fraternity brothers in college, who protested that "dancing is effeminate, it is not a man's work, dancing is for women!" I knew a good deal less about it then than I do now, having read almost nothing on the subject of the history of the dance. My leaning toward the dance was almost entirely instinctive, but it was arrived at slowly, and when I did make my decision, it was firmly grounded on reasons which seemed sound to me, and I had no misgivings in my own mind as to the high calling I had chosen. Since then I have read every word I could find that has been written about dancing in any phase. And in relation to this particular subject of

dancing for men, I have discovered many very illuminating facts, all of which prove conclusively that dancing is and has been essentially and primarily a man's activity.

And yet the false idea clings that dancing is an effeminate expression for men. This can be corrected only with the correcting of the whole fundamental conception in regard to the importance of the art of dancing in general. Thinking people all over the world have been moved by Havelock Ellis's epoch-making book, The Dance of Life, to pause at least and consider; and the more sincere the considering, the more surely will each and everyone agree with him that dancing is at once the supreme manifestation of physical life and the supreme symbol of spiritual life; that it is the loftiest, the most moving and the most beautiful of the arts; that it is the primary art of the human race.

In this man-ruled world there is the feeling (on the part of the men) that God intended all of the really important affairs of the world to be in man's hands. Woman was designed as his mate and helper, but the actual achieving of great deeds was left to man. It is indicative of the low state to which the dance has fallen that we of today consider it a feminine thing, for can you imagine the men of the world allowing any really important thing to be done almost exclusively by women? Of course, it is true the large majority of the men of affairs do not consider dancing of any importance. The presidents of Chambers of Commerce, the Rotary Club chairmen, the respectable and respected pillars of church and society have not even thought with initiative about the subject of dancing; they have accepted ready-made and predigested opinions about this subject, as about all others — original thinking being the rarest commodity in the world at any time. This type of man does not consider any art expression a matter of importance. He thinks of art as a pretty picture to hang on the wall, or a figure of The Good

Fairy to place on the mantelpiece with other useless and dustcatching objects. To him art is the whipped cream on the French pastry and not the cake itself. How far from his mind is the concept that "Art is that work which is most worthy of man's perfected powers"!

These men are the roots and trunk of a human family tree which will some day, almost in spite of them, flower and bear fruit in the shape of an artist and his art. That tree has existed in vain if it does not so flower and bear. We do not despise the root, for it must absorb the nourishment from the soil; nor do we belittle the trunk, which is to say the organization of life. The producing of true beauty — not prettiness — is the ultimate achievement of the human race; for, in the Emersonian sense, Use and Beauty are not antagonistic but rather almost synonymous. Beauty of this kind is that love which has poured from the heart and soul of the artist into a symbol which has the power to touch into life, truth and love each human soul with which it comes in contact. No art is worthy of the name unless it is life-enhancing. That expression which goes by the name of art and which is destructive is false.

I seem to have wandered from my theme, but I reiterate these truisms in regard to the value of art to drive in the fact that art is one of the important affairs of life, and of all the arts dancing is the most fundamental, and thus the most important. It is, therefore, a thing with which men should concern themselves. It would surprise almost every man today, who thinks that he knows a good deal and even thinks that he thinks, to learn in what a high place dancing has been held by every great civilization of the past, and that in all great nations of the past, as well as among savage and primitive peoples, the dancing has been done almost exclusively by men. When the women took part, it was largely as accompaniment, with singing, hand-clapping, or rhythmic movements in one place,

not actually joining in the pattern of the dance. This is not an invariable rule, but indicates the general usage of the past. Dancing being an expression of the big forces of life, they danced their religion, and the celebrants were the priests and medicine men; they danced in preparation for battle and after victory, and the dancers were the soldiers themselves. Both the Greeks and the Japanese, who have much in common, have expressed their war emotions in terms of art through the dance, and the participants were always the noblest born and most virile young men of each nation. Among primitive peoples, even the dances of courtship are the dances of men. The man dances before his beloved in order to display his agility, his strength, and his physical beauty, thus impressing her with his desirability as a mate. He shows by the swiftness of his step, his prowess in the hunt, his ability to provide food for her; he shows by his feats of strength in the dance how able he is to defend her from any enemy, and imitates for her the movements of battle; he shows her by slow and even delicate gestures how tender and considerate he would be in his caressing and affection.

We know that in the animal and bird kingdom it is the male that has all the marks of beauty. The peacock, spreading his tail, executes rhythmic movements which are in fact a dance of courtship to attract the peahen. There is even a theory that the nest is an outcome of the ecstatic courtship dance of a bird — in the pattern of the dance he treads out a hollow in the mud, and when he has won his mate by his dance, he has also created the home for her by the same means.

In the beginning of the drama the first participants were men. Outside of the little city of Athens there gathered a group of men to dance on the threshing floor after the harvest. Later there were too many to dance at one time, and seats were placed around the circle, which was the beginning of the theatre, and through a slow

process of development, the Greek tragedy developed, with dancing and singing chorus, plot, spoken parts, and an elaborate architectural background. Still all the actors, singers and dancers were men. Later we read of the great idols of the Roman people, Pylades and Bathyllus, each with his own theatre — men dancers — over whom the city became divided into factions of enthusiastic support. In all of the countries of the Orient where the drama has reached any dignity, the actors have been and still are men. In China and Japan women on the stage are a very recent and heartily disapproved innovation. And in India, although popular conception thinks of Nautch dancers, bayaderes, and devidassis supplying all of the terpsichorean offerings, I am told on good authority that the greatest dancers recognized as such by the East Indians themselves are men.

It is interesting to note that when the great court ballets were inaugurated in Italy and France, long before the founding by Louis XIV of the French Academy of Music and Dance, the first ballets of which we have any record were composed entirely of men. The introduction of women into the ballet was considered a daring and slightly immoral thing. Even in the list of directors of the Academie we find very few women's names.

The worst blight which the art of dancing has ever suffered is the Paulist, ascetic influence of the Christian Church. This reached its height when, under Savonarola, the monks of Florence invaded the palaces, seized all paintings of the nude, antique or contemporary sculpture representing the naked body, and the manuscripts of all pagan poetry, piled them in a great heap in the centre of the Piazza del Signoria, and burned them — irreplaceable treasures of art. Of course, since dancing uses the body itself as instrument and material, it came under the severest ban of monkish disapproval. And yet those few examples of religious dancing which still survive

in the Christian churches of Europe today are performed by men and boys.

The most adept dancers among the peasants of European countries today are the men, the folk dances of Russia, Sweden, Germany and Hungary exhibit the prowess of men far more than that of women. In Spain until very recent years dancing was largely duet dancing, with the palm for technical excellence going to the men dancers.

Therefore, I made the remark at the beginning of this chapter about perspective: Today in this country the activities of dancing being largely those of women, the general public thinks no further and says that dancing is a woman's art. We are now in an age of mechanics and invention, but it was not so in the past; this is a phase of the world's development. Thinking people also know that we must pass beyond this absorption in machinery and commerce, and eventually concern ourselves with the deeper things of the spirit, if we are going to progress. And so in relation to the dance, the public must come to recognize the rightness and necessity of men in the dance. For, if we can ever call one human quality masculine and another feminine, the essential qualities necessary for success in the dance are masculine qualities. There is no art that requires such a long and arduous preparation, as every real dancer knows. The physical energy which goes into any other sort of art expression is child's play compared to the physical hard work that a dancer does. Physical strength and endurance is considered a masculine quality. Dance technique requires great precision and accuracy of movement and extreme mental control over every part of the body. Precision and accuracy, disciplined by mental control are generally considered masculine qualities. Therefore instead of considering the man who becomes a dancer effeminate, we should rather, if we are logical, consider the girl who takes up dancing as a career one who





loses something of her femininity, inasmuch as she enters upon a work which takes manly qualities to produce a lasting success.

It was directly due to the Church ban on dancing that it became divorced from the great realities of life. Since dancers were forbidden to express religion through the dance, and since the powers of the Church considered dancing evil, when the dance began to revive its hold on the attention of the world, it found itself limited to trivial themes such as sentimental love affairs, petty intrigues, attenuated and pale romance. Thus began the concept of the dance as a thing of artifice, dealing with the fripperies of life. And at that point men began to drop away from the dance as an art worthy of their greatest powers. Men have always done the big things, the important things in life, being quite willing to let the embroideries and ornamentations be the work of women. And until big themes, religious themes, cosmic themes, become again considered as the natural and rightful field of the dance, men capable of doing big things will not see in the dance an opportunity for great art expression.

It is interesting to note that in the revival of interest in the ballet which took place under the name of the Romantic Revolution of the Russian Ballet, the creative genius of the movement was entirely masculine: the promoting and executive head, Diaghilew; the composers (the world has not yet produced a great woman composer, though many have written charming things); the scene and costume designers; the greatest single dancer, Nijinsky; Fokine, who contributed by far the largest amount of creative work; and the ballet masters who kept the corps de ballet up to its early high mark. Except for a few individual women stars, who contributed no idea nor creative spark to the ensemble, the whole Russian ballet movement was a masculine affair.

Let me remark here, parenthetically, that the teachers of dance

from the dawn of history down to the present day have been largely men. The great ballet masters throughout the whole history of the European ballet have been men, and in America today the teachers of dancing recognized as most successful are men.

In America the first dance pioneers were women. The prejudice against dancing was the greatest here, through our Puritan traditions, and against men indulging in any form of art. The suppression of the art instinct in men was so strong that in regard to the most despised among the arts it would have been impossible for a man to have presented himself to the public as a dance pioneer twenty years ago. The public in America tolerated women as dancers, and therefore the rising sap of the renaissance of the dance in America, coming through the line of least resistance, burst into first buds in the personalities of two women.

The antagonism against the expression of beauty through men has been indulged in to the hurt of America in many ways. To quote from Winckelmann again:

"As it is confessedly the beauty of man which is to be conceived under one general idea, so I have noticed that those who are observant of beauty only in women and are moved little or not at all by the beauty of men seldom have an impartial, vital inborn instinct for beauty in art. To such persons the beauty of Greek art will ever seem wanting, because its supreme beauty is rather male than female."

The average man of our country (that is to say a "Babbitt") might bear with equanimity being accused of cheating at cards, embezzling the funds of his firm, or beating his wife, but if he were charged with being beautiful, he would turn berserk. That is because he has fixed in his mind that worst of all mistakes—the confusion of beauty with weakness, effeminacy, prettiness. True beauty is and should be at once a virile beauty of spirit, mind and body.

There is a crying need of great conversion on this subject in America. The physical examination of our entire nation at war time revealed that an appalling proportion of the men of draft age—that is to say, at what should be the prime of life—were unfit for military service. Every sport which reveals the body, such as swimming, track activities and boat-racing, should be encouraged to develop a desire for and pride in physical beauty, for true physical beauty can be achieved only as the radiance of perfect health. And of all physical exercises toward this end dancing is the finest, for not only does it tend toward health, but its every conscious moment is directed toward producing beauty of movement, of posture and of form.

The Greeks recognized this fact and used dancing as the chief means of physical training for their armies. The Pyrrhic dances of ancient Greece were mimetic warfare dances, used in place of the stupid "setting-up exercises" which we use in our army. I speak from experience, as I received physical training in the United States army first as a private soldier, then as a cadet in Officers Training Camp, then in a special school for physical training directors, and later passed on this training when I became a Lieutenant of Infantry. Occasionally I would try to vary the monotony and boredom of these childish movements by introducing a bit of dance technique. Invariably it was found too hard mentally and physically for the men to master. The efficient soldier is one who can execute instantly and accurately not only one order, but sometimes a complicated set of orders, and under fire. The dancer does this very thing moving different parts of the body in difficult movements, in time to a definite beat of music, doing different things with different parts of the body at the same time, in perfect geometric relation to a pattern of other people in an ensemble, and under the most deadly fire known to mankind, the eyes of an audience. (A soldier has

been known to be merciful to a fallen enemy, but no audience was ever merciful to a fallen dancer.) The dance produces the greatest possible coördination between mind and body, and the Greek soldiers, dance-trained, stand as our supreme examples of individual bravery and mass efficiency.

From the standpoint of a career for a man today, there are a great many reasons why he should succeed as a dancer equally as well as does a woman. The physical facts of life are in his favor. In a woman dancer's career there is always the uncertainty of marriage and what it may mean. A man rarely marries unless it is understood in advance that marriage will not interfere with his life work. A woman much more often marries with the equally definite understanding that she becomes her husband's helpmate but has no positive career of her own. Even when in the marriage contract is the agreement that she continues her career, children come with their serious interruption to her work — and in dancing the loss of even a few months of continuous work and practice shows badly in one's execution.

Of course, to offset his physical equipment for success in the dance, the man has the still great prejudice of the general public to fight. This will be one of the most important works of the man dancer's life. The public must be brought back to a realization of the importance of the art of dancing. And when the public in general really appreciates the value of dancing to the advancement of human culture, we will find that they have automatically accepted the fact that the dance is a worthy career for the finest type of men. When we find the public accepting a great man dancer on the same plane as the great in other arts — music, sculpture, painting, literature — even as being of as great a service to humanity as statesmen, scientists and business executives, then we will find that finer types of boys and young men will be drawn into the dance as a life work;

now, through family opposition or their own prejudices and misconceptions regarding the subject, they are repelled or discouraged. Up to very recent times, there have been few examples of men dancers whose achievements and personalities would attract vital, virile young men into the dance as the greatest of art expressions. Some of the men dancers of recent generations have not only been negative but, in the degeneracy and perversion of their lives and its inevitable expression through their performance on the stage, an actual detriment to the cause of dancing for men.

Dancing should not, I hardly need say, be limited to the stage. We use the theatre today as almost the only outlet possible, but we are not bound in our scope by the theatre. I would like to see men dancing in gymnasiums and in stadiums; I would like to see the dance reach again the position it held among the Greeks as the most perfect athletic accomplishment, and the finest means of physical training and development. I prefer dancing out of doors, and I am so sick of filthy dressing rooms, electric lights, and stale air that, paraphrasing the immortal Walt, I would cry: "I swear I will never again mention dancing inside a house!"

With the growth of the public thought in relation to the dance as a great and important human activity will inevitably come an acceptance of the idea of dancing as a virile and manly sport and art expression. The dance cannot reach its complete development and fulfillment of expression in this day and age unless it is an equal partnership. It will have to be just as much an art and career for men as for women. There are phases of life and qualities of thought, vital and important, which cannot be expressed through the feminine body no matter how fine or how wonderful the woman is. Just as, of course, there are feminine ideas which a man not only cannot do, but should not attempt to do. If the dance is going to be complete and express the wholeness of life, it must express the

great and fine masculinity of movement as well as the delicacy and charm of womanhood.

Our aim in the production of a great American ballet is to have that ballet an expression of the best of American life in the dance. How could woman adequately express the wholeness of America? The history of our country and founding of our nation is the work of both men and women. The achievements of building cities and spanning rivers and putting railroads from sea to sea are man's achievements — the backbone and brawn of America. And if America is going to speak through man as well as woman, we cannot have a great American ballet unless America can produce great men dancers — young men who have high ideals, who are capable of making great lawyers and great merchants and great seafarers, but who see in the dance a wider field of usefulness to humanity.

Fifty per cent of the expression of life today is woman's, but I claim that the other fifty per cent can be expressed only by men and that the world must recognize both the fitness and the need for men in the dance, must recognize and respect the career of the creative dance as being not only a permissible career for men but as a calling which, if taken in consecrated devotion, is as high as any of the great professions.







CHAPTER VIII DANCING IN CHURCH

"I say no man has ever yet been half devout enough,

None has ever yet adored or worship'd half enough,

None has begun to think how divine he himself is, and how certain the future is.

"I say that the real permanent grandeur of these States must be their religion,
Otherwise there is no real and permanent grandeur;
(Nor character nor life worthy the name without religion),
Nor land nor man or woman without religion."

WALT WHITMAN



ELIGION and the religious consciousness so often become crystalized in a religious creed or institution, and then proceed to adhere to the letter, letting the spirit which gave it birth die.

A church service in which the entire congregation does not actively participate is

generally the expression of the latter end of a religious movement. In the beginning not only primitive religions but the religions of all the great ancient civilizations used the dance as their chief and, in some cases, exclusive means of religious expression. This included even the early Christian Church, but today in the large majority of Protestant churches the congregation sits passively listening to intellectualized discussions of dogma, listening to scripture read, listening to a choir and soloists, but not themselves taking any

active part in the ritual or worship except the singing of a few lugubrious hymns.

One day in the early years of my associations with Ruth St. Denis, we were conversing about the lack of recognition of the religious value of her dancing by the general public. Her great Temple Dance, Radha, taught the Buddhistic doctrine — that yielding to the gratification of the senses leads only to despair and death, and that spiritual power and peace is attained only by renunciation. A large part of even that public which appreciated the æsthetic value of her dancing still did not acknowledge the fact that a sermon was being preached to them through the performance of this dance.

The great obstacle, as Miss St. Denis pointed out, was that provincial point of view which calls Oriental peoples following the teachings of their great spiritual leaders "heathens." Americans would answer when told that this was a religious dance, "Yes, but it's heathen." "I wonder," Miss St. Denis added, "if I had it to do again, if I would clothe my dances of spiritual import in the art form of an alien people, thus preventing understanding and acceptance on the part of my public." This conversation was the spark which kindled an idea that had lain dormant in me for some time, and I said, "Why not, then, dance the creeds and beliefs of present day Protestant churches in forms so familiar that everyone would be forced to think about dance in relation to worship and ritual?" From that time on I was unable to rest until I had seen the dream made a reality. In the fall of 1917, I was invited by the Interdenominational Church of San Francisco to give an entire church service in dance form in the Scottish Rite Temple of that city, which was the meeting place of this congregation. The Reverend Doctor Henry Frank preceded the church service with a lecture on the subject of the Dance and Religion, and during the actual church service there was not a word spoken or sung. I worked out a composite of ele-

ments of all the Protestant Church services of today in America. I danced the Opening Prayer, the Doxology, the Gloria, an anthem (The Palms), the Twenty-third Psalm, a sermon (which was a dramatic narrative form analagous to the parables and based on the text. "Ye shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free"), a hymn, Beulah Land, and a benediction. This was, so far as I know, the first time in this age when dancing was definitely connected with an actual orthodox church service. (It was not until sometime afterward, as I understand, that Dr. Norman Guthrie made his first experiment at St. Marks-in-the-Bouerie in New York.) There was a very large congregation present, and the press was represented in full. They were surprisingly kind, as one would expect this obvious chance for humor to be made the most of. However, all of the special writers who covered this church service treated it in a dignified and serious way. The idea sounds slightly sensational, but as my motive was a sincere one, the dance movements were correctly and fittingly worked out to portray the qualities of thought contained in the various elements of the ritual.

There was no shock nor offense in the actual performance itself, nor has anyone been able to find anything but a reverent and beautiful sermon in the dance which Dr. Guthrie has for several years now inaugurated in his church service once a year on the occasion of the "Feast of the Assumption" at St. Marks-in-the-Bouerie.

My only criticism of Dr. Guthrie's ritual is that if anything it is a little anaemic as an expression of real, vital and significant religious feeling; but, in going against such a vast volume of prejudice and ignorance, he has of course had to move very circumspectly. Dr. Guthrie has made a very deep research in regard to the dance and its purpose in religious expression and particularly its history in the Christian Church. He has published a monograph on the subject which is sincere, convincing and erudite.

There seems to be no question that the primitive Christian Church for the first few hundred years of its existence had a church service which was very largely, if not entirely, dancing.

One of the most interesting contributions to the subject has been made by Edward Carpenter in Pagan and Christian Creeds, the first chapters of which build up an almost unbreakable chain of evidence that every tenet of Christian faith and every article in the creed and every phase of the ritual is an outgrowth and survival of the pagan religions existing prior to and contemporary with Christianity's beginnings. I quote from his chapter on Ritual Dancing as follows: "I think we may take it as proved that from the earliest ages, and before History, a great body of religious belief and ritual — first appearing among very primitive folk whom we should call 'savages' — has come slowly down, broadening and differentiating itself on the way into a great variety of forms, but embodying always certain main ideas which became in time the accepted doctrines of the later Churches — the Indian, the Egyptian, the Mithraic, the Christian, and so forth. Further I think we may safely say that there is no certain proof that the body of beliefs just mentioned sprang from any one particular centre far back and radiated thence by dissemination and mental contagion over the rest of the world; but the evidence rather shows that these beliefs were, for the most part, the spontaneous outgrowths (in various localities) of the human mind at certain stages of its evolution; that they appeared, in the different races and peoples, at different periods according to the degree of evolution, and were largely independent of intercourse and contagion, though of course in cases considerably influenced by it. In the third place, I think we may see — and this is the special subject of the present chapter — that at a very early period, when humanity was hardly capable of systematic expression in what we call Philosophy or Science, it could not well





rise to an ordered and literary expression of its beliefs, such as we find in the later religions and the churches (Babylonian, Jewish, East Indian, Christian or what-not) and yet that it felt these beliefs very intensely and was urged, almost compelled, to their utterance in some form or other. And so it came about that people expressed themselves in a vast mass of ritual and myth — customs, ceremonies, legends, stories — which on account of their popular and concrete form were handed down for generations, and some of which linger on still in the midst of our modern civilization. These rituals and legends were, many of them, absurd enough, rambling and childish in character, and preposterous in conception, yet they gave the expression needed; and some, of course, as we have seen, were full of meaning and suggestion.

"A critical and commercial civilization, such as ours, in which (notwithstanding much talk about Art) the artistic sense is greatly lacking, or at any rate but little diffused, does not as a rule understand that poetic rites, in the evolution of peoples, came naturally before anything like ordered poems or philosophy or systematized views about life and religion — such as we love to wallow in. Things were felt before they were spoken. The loading of diseases into disease-boats, of sins onto scape-goats, the propitiation of the forces of nature by victims, human or animal, sacrifices, ceremonies of rebirth, eucharistic feasts, sexual communions, orgiastic celebrations of the common life, and a host of other things — all said plainly enough what was meant, but not in words. Partly no doubt it was that at some early time words were more difficult of command and less flexible in use than actions, and at all times are they not less expressive? Partly it was that mankind was in the child-stage. The child delights in ritual, in symbol, in expression through material objects and actions:

'See, at his feet some little plan or chart,
Some fragment from his dream of human life,
Shaped by himself with newly learned art;
A wedding or a festival,
A mourning or a funeral,
And this hath now his heart.'

"And primitive man in the child-stage felt a positive joy in ritual celebrations, and indulged in expressions which we but little understand; for these had then his heart.

"One of the most pregnant of these expressions was Dancing. Children dance instinctively. They dance with rage; they dance with joy, with sheer vitality; they dance with pain or sometimes with savage glee at the suffering of others; they delight in mimic combats or in animal plays and disguises.

"So Dance to the savage and the early man was not merely an amusement or a gymnastic exercise as the books often try to make out, but it was also a serious and intimate part of life, an expression of religion and the relation of man to non-human Powers."

Continuing this line of thought more specifically into the subject of the place of dancing in the early Christian Church, I find in Havelock Ellis's The Dance of Life the following: "All religions, and not merely those of primitive character, have been at the outset, and sometimes throughout, in some measure saltatory. That was recognized even in the ancient world by acute observers, like Lucian, who remarks in his essay on dancing that 'you cannot find a single ancient mystery in which there is no dancing'; in fact most people say of the devotees of the Mysteries that 'they dance them out.' This is so all over the world. It is not more pronounced in early Christianity, and among the ancient Hebrews who danced before the ark, than among the Australian aborigines whose great corroborees are religious dances conducted by the medicine-men with their sacred staves in their hands. Every American Indian tribe

seems to have had its own religious dances, varied and elaborate, often with a richness of meaning which the patient study of modern investigators has but slowly revealed. The Shamahs in the remote steppes of Northern Siberia have their ecstatic religious dances, and in modern Europe the Turkish dervishes — perhaps of related stock — still dance in their cloisters similar ecstatic dances, combined with song and prayer, as a regular part of devotional service.

"These religious dances, it may be observed, are sometimes ecstatic, sometimes pantomimic. It is natural that this should be so. By each road it is possible to penetrate toward the divine mystery of the world. The auto-intoxication of rapturous movement brings the devotees, for a while at least, into that self-forgetful union with the not-self which the mystic ever seeks. The ecstatic Hindu dance in honour of the pre-Aryian hill god, afterwards Siva, became in time a great symbol, 'the clearest image of the activity of God,' it has been called, 'which any art or religion can boast of.' Pantomimic dances, on the other hand, with their effort to heighten natural expression and to imitate natural process, bring the dancers into the sphere of creation and enable them to assist vicariously in the energy of the gods. The dance thus becomes the presentation of a divine drama, the vital reënactment of a sacred history, in which the worshipper is enabled to play a real part. In this way ritual arises.

"What by some is considered to be the earliest known Christian ritual — the Hymn of Jesus assigned to the second century — is nothing but a sacred dance. Eusebius in the third century stated that Philo's description of the worship of the Therapeuts agreed at all points with Christian custom, and that meant the prominence of dancing, to which indeed Eusebius often refers in connection with Christian worship. It has been supposed by some that the Christian church was originally a theatre, one choir being the raised stage, even the word 'choir,' it is argued, meaning an enclosed space for

dancing. It is certain that at the Eucharist the faithful gesticulated with their hands, danced with their feet, flung their bodies about. Chrysostom, who referred to this behavior 'round the Holy Table at Antioch, only objected to drunken excesses in connection with it; the custom itself he evidently regarded as traditional and right.

"While the central function of Christian worship is a sacred drama, a divine pantomine, the associations of Christianity and dancing are by no means confined to the ritual of the Mass and its later more attenuated transformations. The very idea of dancing had a sacred and mystic meaning to the early Christians, who had meditated profoundly on the text, 'We have piped unto you and ye have not danced.' Origen prayed that above all things there may be made operative in us the mystery 'of the stars dancing in Heaven for the salvation of the universe.' So that the monks of the Cistercian Order, who in a later age worked for the world more especially by praying for it (orare est laborare), were engaged in the same task on earth as the stars in Heaven; dancing and praying are the same thing. St. Basil, who was so enamoured of natural things, described the angels dancing in Heaven, and later the author of the Dieta Salutis (said to have been St. Bonaventura), which is supposed to have influenced Dante in assigning so large a place to dancing in the Paradiso, described dancing as the occupation of the inmates of Heaven, and Christ as the leader of the dance. Even in more modern times an ancient Cornish carol sang of the life of Jesus as a dance, and represented him as declaring that he died in order that man 'may come unto the general dance.'

"This attitude could not fail to be reflected in practice. Genuine dancing, not merely formalized and unrecognisable dancing such as the traditionalised Mass, must have been frequently introduced into Christian worship in early times. Until a few centuries ago it remained not uncommon, and it even still persists in remote corners

of the Christian world. In English cathedrals dancing went on until the fourteenth century. At Paris, Limoges, and elsewhere in France, the priests danced in the choir at Easter up to the seventeenth century, in Roussillon up to the eighteenth century. Roussillon is a Catalan province with Spanish traditions, and it is in Spain, where dancing is a deeper and more passionate impulse than elsewhere in Europe, that religious dancing took firmest root and flourished longest. In the cathedrals of Seville, Toledo, Valencia, and Ieres there was formerly dancing, though it now only survives at a few special festivals in the first. At Alaro in Mallorca, also at the present day, a dancing company called Els Cosiers, on the festival of St. Roch, the patron saint of the place, dances in the church in fanciful costumes with tambourines, up to the steps of the high altar, immediately after Mass, and then out of the church. In another part of the Christian world, in the Abyssinian church an offshoot of the Eastern church - dancing is also said still to form a part of the worship."

We note here the words "Genuine dancing, not merely formalized and unrecognizable dancing, such as the traditionalized Mass." In a lecture in St. Paul some years ago I made the statement that the Mass of the Catholic Church today is a survival of the danced church service of the primitive Christian Church, and I was interrupted by someone at the back of the auditorium hotly claiming that I had insulted the Catholic Church. Such was not my intention, of course. On the contrary I was paying it a compliment by indicating it had had the intelligence to retain more than any other Christian church a most powerful and valuable element in its church services, which is the Dance. It is very interesting to find that my opinion was verified by Robert Hugh Benson, who started life a Protestant but eventually became a Catholic priest, and rose to some considerable distinction in the church. In his early days when he

was in the transitional period between Protestantism and Catholicism, he wrote a book called *Papers of a Pariah*, in which was a chapter, *Dancing as a Religious Exercise*. In this chapter he sees the Mass exactly as I see it. "It was during High Mass, then, not in France but in England, that the thought first came to my mind that perhaps here was a survival of the ancient religious dance—that stately, magnificent series of slow movements which surely may express devotion as well as can the color of vestment or sanctuary, or the sounds of melody.

"I remember being reproved as a boy for indulging in gestures. I was told that the modulations of the voice were sufficient for any emotions proper to my age and condition; and that gesticulation was an evidence of barbaric impulse. I resented the rebuke at the time, and I resent it still; it appears to me singularly unwarranted. We have no more right to condemn the language of the hand and arms than the language of the tongue. We are furnished by our Creator with all these members; we desire to express ourselves as forcibly as possible; and why in the world should we not do so by all the means at our command?

"With this in mind, then, observe once more the motions of those three men in green at the foot of that lighted, fragrant altar, and see how orderly and exquisite is the whole affair. It is no less than a sacred dance, and there is hardly one religious emotion that does not find its representative there."

Then Mr. Benson describes in elaborate and poetic detail every stage and phase of the great drama of the Mass in the light of it being a symbolic, pantomimic ballet and concludes with the following words:

"But how surprisingly graceful and eloquent the whole affair has been! Emotions have been expressed in four or five languages simultaneously: by sound, color, smell, words and movements.





Could anything be more explicit, more likely to obtain its object before God to whom all hearts are open, more likely to save His worshippers from distraction?

"The Catholic who aspires to count all men his brethren employs every vehicle that his romantic brain can suggest; he batters the Kingdom of Heaven by five portals at once; he is not ashamed to take his place with the worshippers of Isis and Cybele, with King David, and with the naked Fijean, and to dance with all his might before the Lord.

"I must confess that I shall look with dismay upon my clergy-man next Sunday. It is not that he does not dance, but that he has nothing to dance about, and has not learned the steps."

The attitude of later day Protestant Christianity has been illogical and ridiculous in regard to dancing. Those very fundamentalists who most vehemently proclaim the entire Bible to be the inspired word of God and to be taken literally are the very ones who have most bitterly condemned dancing, and yet dancing is spoken of seventeen times in the Bible and always with approval. In Psalm 150: 4, we are given definite and positive instructions—"Praise him with the timbrel and dance," and in Psalm 149: 3, "Let them praise his name in the dance." There is the famous example in Samuel II, 6: 16, of David's dancing before the Ark to the glory of the Lord. When after the passage of the Red Sea the men were fearful and rebelliously muttering, Miriam seized a tambourine and started dancing into the wilderness, followed first by the women and children and ultimately by the men.

In banishing dancing from the church service, the Protestants have done their cause incalculable injury. It is indicative of the whole attitude of Puritanism in regard to the value of art. They have tried to separate art and religion into two different and almost antagonistic forces.

I wish that every minister in America today could get the concept of art which is expressed by Albert Edward Wiggam in his New Decalogue of Science: "Art is the very flowering of the whole evolutionary process, simply because it is the flowering of the human spirit. It exists only in man — the highest level to which evolution has attained. But its biological value lies in the fact that it is man's highest and deepest criticism of himself. It is the final interpretation to himself of his own passions, hopes, fears, vices, virtues, foolishness, wisdom, defects, beauty - his bodily and mental potentialities and character. It lifts him to new critical levels of all the values of his own bodily and spiritual life. It inspires him to his loftiest deeds and fills him with a new and glorious fear of wrong. It holds before him the highest possible objectives of ethics, and gives concreteness and immediacy to his religious longings. It takes the chaos, the haphazard, the mêlée of his daily life and sets it before him in ordered simplicity, symmetry and perspective. It touches his world with new adventure, teaches him to guard the heart with a new wisdom, gives new trends to thought and destiny. It leads the dejected soul forever anew to the still and holy altars of beauty and passion, gives an ever-freshening lilt and joy to the moral struggle, and stamps new conceptions of life, character and destiny upon the imagination of mankind.

"Art is the Ark of the Covenant in which all ideals of beauty and excellence are carried before the race. Science deals with matter and energy, but art deals with life. Four-fifths of life are not in the realm of science. They are probably the best four-fifths. They lie in the field of beauty, art, imagination, dream. And it is only when art can give men beautiful dreams that they will progress in mind and person toward that 'sweet fulfillment of the flesh — beauty.' Art absolutely creates for us our ideals of human beauty and inner excellence. And our ideals of beauty and inner excellence determine

the basis of all evolution. Beauty is thus nature's flaming banner of her own evolution. Art is more precious than science. Men can live without science, but they can not live significantly without art. Art will lead men forward to a better human nature. Art will then become what it should be and is, man's highest contribution to the processes of his own evolution. It will lead men by its gentle selective processes and its creative ideals toward a wiser, saner, healthier and more beautiful human race."

If on top of this general concept of art the clergy could also agree with Havelock Ellis upon the art of dance being the fundamental art of the human race, it would logically follow that it could not be divorced from religion nor from religious expression. There is a general admission on the part of the churches today that they are losing ground as far as their vital contact with humanity is concerned, and various ways and means are being tried to reëstablish that contact, but it will never hold its place again until the clergy become artists or artists go into the church to revitalize it. The greatest sins which the church have committed have been artistic and æsthetic sins. The church in some of its doings today is an offense against good taste, against beauty and against every craving of the human soul to be fed of beauty.

Theosophists have a saying that the artists of today are the priests of tomorrow at school. They believe that the new root race now being born in the world will have a religion, the expression of which will take the form of art, and that those people who are now expressing themselves through forms of beauty will be the priests of this new religion. Certainly the church will have to reshape decidedly its trend so as to include a greater activity of art expression and especially reinclude dancing as a part of its rituals and ceremonies, or else there will grow up among artists a much more definite religious consciousness, and communities of artists will find

themselves functioning as a church, with a definite and recognized purpose of providing spiritual food as well as æsthetic satisfaction. Our own feeling about Denishawn in its ultimate development into an ideal institution is first and foremost that it be a place where life is lived as an art, and we believe that the teaching of dancing, and the study of all the synthetic arts embraced by the dance, if consecratedly pursued, will release and develop true religious consciousness.

I believe that the dance has actual power to heal. In this day and age there is hardly any intelligent person who denies that healing of physical ills is achieved by other than material laws. There has grown up a vast following for all such religions, cults, sciences, such as Christian Science, New Thought, Unity Centers, Psycho-Analysis, Applied Psychology and others too numerous to mention. When a treatment is given from practitioner to patient, the healing truth is passed from one to the other by means of words either spoken or written, and I believe that movement is a more potent means of communicating spiritual truths than any form of words. Since time immemorial, dances have been used by medicine men of primitive tribes to heal diseases. And even the advanced thought of today in the form of spiritual healing can be more effectively put into operation by means of the dance than any other way.

I have written a scenario, called Dance that Heals. I have known many cases where people, coming to our performances from a sickbed, suffering with headaches and even more organic ills, have sought us back stage or written after the performance to say, "I was healed by your dancing." If this is achieved merely by the beauty and rhythm of dances designed purely for entertainment, how much more will it result from dances scientifically designed to demonstrate the great realities of life? The answer is that those who are healed through watching this Healing Dance should engage in dancing as an expression of their whole condition — not jazz,

but dances which are the kind spoken of in the Psalms, where we are exhorted to "praise the Lord with the timbrel and with dance."

Delsarte said that motion was the language of the emotions, and that the dance was the finest and most effective means of expressing spiritual thought or idea.

In Tertium Organum of Ouspensky we read, "Art serves beauty, i.e., emotional knowledge of its own kind. Art discovers beauty in everything, and compels man to feel it and therefore to know. Art is a powerful instrument of knowledge of the noumenal world; mysterious depths, each one more amazing than the last, open to vision of man when he holds in his hands this magical key. But let him only think that this mystery is not for knowledge but for pleasure in it, and all the charm disappears at once. Just as soon as art begins to take delight in that beauty which is already found, instead of the search for new beauty, an arrestment occurs and art becomes a superfluous estheticism, encompassing man's vision like a wall. The aim of art is the search for beauty, just as the aim of religion is the search for God and Truth. And exactly as art stops, so religion stops also as soon as it ceases to search for God and Truth, thinking it has found them. This idea is expressed in the precept 'Seek . . . the kingdom of God and his righteousness.' It does not say find, but merely seek!"

In speaking of the fourth dimensional existence, Ouspensky intimates that the language of the fourth dimension will be like music, only above and beyond music, and I believe that spiritual dance is the language of the fourth dimension. There is an old French proverb which says, "What cannot be spoken, can be sung, and what cannot be sung can be danced." The dance is, therefore, an expression beyond song, and in the fourth dimensional consciousness we will exchange spiritually with each other through the medium of dancing, needing no words.

There are literally hundreds of books which deal entirely or partly with the subject of dancing and religion or with ritual dancing or the Sacred Dance. Fraser's *The Golden Bough* is the most completely exhaustive work dealing with Mythology, Ritual and Ceremony that has ever been written.

W. O. E. Oesterly, D.D., an English clergyman, has very recently published a volume called The Sacred Dance, in which he admits his largest debt is to The Golden Bough. Oesterly takes the stand that among savage and primitive peoples the dance was necessary in order to contact divinity, but that as mankind developed he was able to make his contact with God directly, and thus was able to shed the dance as a worn-out tool. This point of view negatives and lessens the value of his entire work, which is a treasure house of information in regard to forms of sacred dancing among ancient peoples. On the contrary we started in an Eden of at-one-ment with God, and dancing was a normal expression of that condition. In these sadder periods, since the human race has gotten away from its Godconsciousness, an inharmonious, unrhythmic, ugly movement is the expression of that fallen state. When we achieve through conscious effort that union with deity, which we once had unconsciously, we will find ourselves dancing as naturally and as inevitably as we breathe.

Havelock Ellis says: "Dancing, we may see throughout the world, has been so essential, so fundamental a part of all vital and undegenerate religion, that, whenever a new religion appears, a religion of the spirit and not merely an anaemic religion of the intellect, we should still have to ask of it the question of the Bantu: 'What do you dance?'"



CHAPTER IX DANCING AND THE THEATRE



OR eight chapters I have been largely positive, but now after the manner of Walt Whitman: "A song of obstacles I sing, a song of the dancer's undoing!"

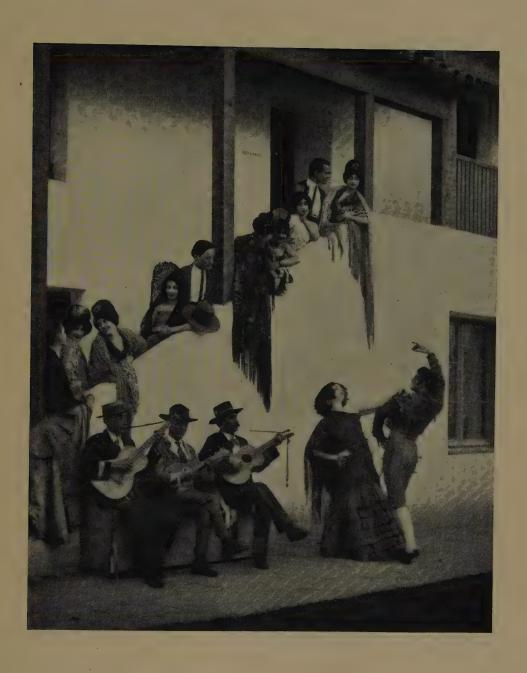
Granted that we have a rising generation of young dancers who are of fine character, of intelligence, who possess strength and beauty

of body, have high ideals in regard to the art of dance, and furthermore granted that they have been able to receive sound training and have arrived at the point of being ready to show a more or less finished performance to the public, the fact remains that there is no outlet for this type of dancer except through one of the forms of the commercial theatre.

Except for the two ballets, that of Madame Pavlowa and our own, there are today no organizations devoted exclusively to the dance; and so dancers, seeking both an opportunity to express themselves and to make a living by their dancing, have open to them the revues, vaudeville, cabarets and moving-picture theatres.

Let us first consider the problem of the dancer in the revue. I eliminate at the outset the question of the chorus girl; if she is content to be a chorus girl, she is not the type of dancer we are considering, and if she is not content to be a chorus girl, the fact

of her having, under financial pressure, to go into the chorus, has no more bearing on this chapter than if she had gone into a drygoods store, with the exception that occasionally a girl in the chorus will for one reason or another attract the attention of a manager and be given a chance to do a bit. However, we are discussing the problem of the artist-dancer. If the girl has dances which are costumed and in a finished condition, she can with more or less difficulty secure a try-out before the managers or producers of the revues. Sometimes she is accepted and given a contract, which seems to her very fine, and is told to report with her dances at the theatre for rehearsals on a given date. I will cite the instance of one specific dancer which is not an exaggeration, in order to illume more definitely the procedure from this point on. This dancer brought her dances in a finished condition to the rehearsal as directed. As the morning proceeded she was called upon to perform these dances again for the producers. The first thing that happened in this case was that, one of the producers being also a composer, all of the music had to appear as if written by him. Therefore, the music of her dances was discarded and a distorted substitute, which endeavored to double the rhythmic pattern of the original, was given her as a musical accompaniment. Then it was decided that the dance was much too long. Therefore, without relation to the architecture of the dance or its proportions and balance, and without consulting the dancer, large sections of the dance were removed. The costume which she had worked out with much thought and love, hard labor and expense, was discarded in favor of another creation which seemed to measure up to the producer's idea of what the public wants. As the rehearsals continued, she discovered that she was not even to have a full-sized stage to dance upon, but that certain mechanical devices were being installed upon which the chorus girls would be shot up out of the floor into the air during her dance.





The producer changed the end of her dance so that she, too, could be manipulated by stage machinery to give a trick and sensational surprise finish. In this case I happened to have seen the dance in its original condition and also attended the opening night of the revue. The abortion which this dancer eventually brought before the audience was something to make strong men weep.

The Greenwich Village Follies, under John Murray Anderson's art direction, has had the greatest respect for the art of the dance of any of the revues in America, and dancers such as Ada Forman and Martha Graham have had the privilege of doing art dances in an almost unchanged condition in the various seasons of these revues.

In the Ziegfeld Follies in the past years I have seen nothing but jazz and toe-dancing, and in the case of the toe-dancers I find that ninety-nine out of a hundred of them are made to subordinate everything to the doing of stunts. She must do rapid turns and continue them to the point of making the audience applaud, or she must do the Relevé en Arabesque à derrière, which from Pavlowa down is a never failing applause-getter. (More than any other type of dancer, the toe-dancer in the revue has apparently no regard for music whatsoever.) In the case of the Vanities, Scandals and others, there is that same monotony of jazz and toe-dancers performing acrobatic stunts. I remember one year when in every revue in New York the feature dancer kicked the back of her head, did a "cart-wheel" and "the splits" some time during the evening. The same general condition prevails in regard to the men dancers in the revues. They must either be jazz or acrobatic dancers, or else act largely as the supporting partners for the girls who do toe-dancing or acrobatic dancing. There is almost no possibility of an artist-dancer having anything remotely like ideal conditions in which to present a complete and finished work of art in a revue.

The next main division of the commercial theatre which provides for any dancing is vaudeville. If the girl has only her own dances and costumes, her sole approach to this is in the act of some one else. The most artistic dancing acts that have appeared in vaudeville have been a definite product of a definite school and, of course, in that case the dancer has presumably been a pupil of that school and is dancing the creations of the teacher-producer. The other type of acts in vaudeville are generally the commercially produced acts which again depend largely upon the well-known popular elements of jazz, eccentric and acrobatic dancing and stunt toedancing. If the dancer is given a job with an act of this kind, she is fortunate if she is able to do one solo of her own. This she will continue to do for the full length of the booking of the act, which may run close to a year, twice a day, week after week. She will be moving from town to town, having no chance to study and very little chance to practice.

If, as happens now and then, the dancer is able to finance the producing of her own act, she has not avoided her troubles by any means. She has had to put up all the money in advance to pay for scenery and costumes and music and then has had to "try out," playing various small engagements in and around New York, where the agents and booking-managers can see the act; and then the report comes that she can have booking if she makes certain changes, if she will introduce certain elements of jazz and tricks and vaude-ville tempo — which is to remove all sense of poise, relaxation and quiet, supplanting these with a sense of hysteric speed. If, after bitter tears and much hard work, she makes these concessions in order to get her booking and realize on her investment, she finds the contract price has so worked out that, after she has paid her commissions, railroad fares, her production cost and living expenses, she is very fortunate to have any money left at the end of a season.

By being able to hit the popular taste with an act that is inexpensively but effectively put together, a dancer will be able to save a surplus and what she does with that surplus, as a progressive artist-dancer, we will consider later in this chapter.

The next outlet for dancers is the cabarets. The same obstacles that I have enumerated for revues and vaudeville are just as great here, with the extra downward pull of a most unsympathetic atmosphere in which to work, the closeness of people and the need of competing for attention with the noise of hurrying waiters and the clatter of dishes.

The only possible reason for an artist-dancer going into a cabaret would be because of an offer providing enough definite money to give her, at the end of the contract, a definite sum with which to further her art career in some manner which is already planned and for which she is working. She has the advantage of staying in one city so that she can do a certain amount of studying and practice, but on the other hand the cabaret hours are so prolonged that her day is broken up by the late sleeping hours.

Certain of the big moving-picture houses in the larger cities of the country have made an effort toward maintaining a permanent ballet, or at least a ballet master. These have invariably followed the old rule of securing a foreign ballet master and a toe-dancing ballet, and such performances as I have seen in these theatres so far have not been of a very high order of merit. This is a pity. Here is a condition in which really fine dancing could be encouraged and promoted. Occasionally they have made gestures toward doing fine things, and I know of one case where a New York moving-picture theatre engaged Mr. Adolph Bolm for a short period of time to put on some dance offerings of a high order, but these efforts have not been sustained and there is at present no indication of the creative impulse finding a real home in the moving-picture theatres.

The training of the dancer is long and arduous and, as in the case of all thorough art training, expensive. Thus when she meets this condition in the commerical theatre world, it only results in profound discouragement. As conditions are now, it is almost impossible for a dancer to make a continuous living at her dancing unless she is willing to lower her ideals to the point of becoming a jazz dancer or an acrobatic or stunt dancer or merely a chorus girl.

The quality of the girls and boys who are being attracted to the art of the dance each year grows better and better. They come in the main from upper middle-class families and are cultured, educated and of high ideals. Therefore, after this type of girl has tried for some months or years to succeed as a dancer and finds that there is no circumstance or condition in which she can dance in the way that she desires to dance, and earn a living, she becomes discouraged and either gives up her career and goes home to her family — eventually marrying and passing on her thwarted ambitions to another generation — or she is able to transfer her desire for an art expression into some other art medium, which means always more or less beginning over again.

The dancer who has financial backing from her family can survive longer; and if she has the means, either from this source or money which she has earned from a successful vaudeville tour or cabaret contract, she may rent a theatre for a special matinée and give herself the satisfaction of one performance in which she is able to dance her own dances in her own way. These matinées are sometimes used as the best way of introducing one's self to the revue managers and vaudeville booking agents for future commercial engagements, as well as being an artistic satisfaction, but they are very expensive and often the girl with the most talent is the one who cannot afford this type of outlet. There is also, of course, the hope and possibility that this matinée may lead to a contract with

a concert booking manager and eventually to a concert tour. However, even there the dancer finds that, for one reason and another, the public demands "a show."

Since the tour of the Diaghilew Ballet, the colossal losses of which were borne by American art patrons, the concert-goer expects in a dance performance, scenery, a ballet ensemble, and gorgeous costumes, and for his ticket expects to pay only the same amount that he pays to hear a great singer or a great pianist or violinist, who has no production expense.

The only two dancing companies that have played for long and continuous tours in this country in the last four years are those of Madame Pavlowa and our own, and in both cases these conditions are met. That is why there are so few dancers in the concert field.

Expressing one's self through the medium of the dance in the producing of ballets is the most expensive art in the world. There is the element of music and the endless months of preparation and production which must be paid for before the first performance can go on; the scenic investiture for each ballet, which runs into thousands of dollars; the costumes, which in the case of a group of divertissements change every three minutes; the electric lighting equipment; the heavy expense of traveling, railroad fares, hauling of baggage; salaries to the company, stage hands and orchestra—all this makes it a field to which few are called and still less are chosen.

The following editorial appeared in the Musical America of July 25, 1925. "Terpsichor the Unwanted. It is difficult to reconcile the crowd of twenty thousand persons who attended the first Denishawn program at the Stadium last week with the oft repeated assertion that New York will not support serious dancing. During the past season, when musical and dramatic efforts stepped on each other's toes and the art exhibitions succeeded each other with be-

wildering rapidity, poor Terpsichore was seen only occasionally. And when she ventured before the public it was timidly, uncertain of favor for her lovely art.

"Professional cynics discourage dance appearances. They point to the various non-successes with which recent seasons were punctured. However, the cause for these failures often lies deeper than the surface. Sometimes, as in the case of the Swedish Ballet's sad fate, the hastily gathered and scrappy orchestra, unable to play the intricate modern scores, was at fault.

"Sometimes a danseuse appears, out of practice, and blames the public for its non-enthusiasm. Again, a famous ballerine is on the stage for fifteen minutes on a two hours' program and expects the public to be satisfied with an hour and three-quarters of bad support and worse entr'acte music. Often the programs are badly constructed, the sets and lighting second-hand and ineffective, the publicity insufficient.

"All these things, and many more, should be taken into consideration before claiming that New York will not support good dancing. The Stadium experiment should encourage devotees of Terpsichore to bring the shy Muse back into the limelight and applause of an inevitable public."

What the editors do not realize is that there is an organized channel for the expression of every other form of art except the art of the dance, and that when the individual dancer carries the burden of producing a show with all of the business details, and all of the stage management details, and gives one performance only, nothing less than a faulty performance can be expected. The reason that our performances have been such a great success in New York is because we have arrived each spring at the end of a long season where every single number has had the polish of hundreds of repetitions, and the performance is smooth because a stage crew has by

this time been trained so that every scene cue and every light cue is done correctly and automatically, with all waits and delays eliminated and the actual running of the show has become a work of art after months of constant thought and attention to produce just that result.

I must give credit here, however, to the activities of the Misses Lewisohn in their Neighborhood Playhouse. They have, at all times, acted as the finest type of art patrons and in their interesting theatre-workshop they have given a most generous proportion of time and attention to the art of the dance. Many beautiful ideas and much splendid talent have found haven there which otherwise would probably have had no opportunity at all; but, of course, they are interested in the art of the theatre as a whole and cannot give exclusive attention to the problems of the dance.

A singer in her career looks forward to the day when she will be able to sing in Grand Opera and knows that there is an organized institution, endowed and supported to make possible the continuance of the tradition of opera, its performance, and also for creative work therein.

Symphony orchestras now exist in many cities, endowed and supported by the community and by art patrons as an established institution for maintaining high standards of instrumental music. There are galleries and museums in which the work of the painters and sculptors finds its way to a waiting public, and in the very world of the theatre there now is a general movement toward a similar condition. The Theatre Guild has secured through its subscriptions and patrons a support which assures them the opportunity to produce the very best in the world of drama and to produce it adequately and beautifully, and so great has been their success that they have now built a beautiful theatre of their own. It is all in the line of light, but it shows even more plainly than ever before that the art

of the dance is truly the Cinderella among the arts for it has not a home of its own, and comes into the theatre or concert hall as an outsider who really does not belong there at all.

The actual fact exists that no matter how fine the dancer, nor what new and beautiful ideas and developments may appear in the art of dance there is no definite place where the dancers and the public may get together. The dancing which has had genuine artistic value in the revues and in vaudeville and in the cabarets has survived by accident and almost in spite of the forces existing in the world of the theatre today. We have maintained our own small company of Denishawn Dancers, American born and American trained, at an almost incredible sacrifice and effort, and have taken that company into theatres and concert halls of the country trying to preach the gospel of the dance as a great art. There still remains no place for us when we come into New York, the regular theatres are all booked with the productions of the dramatic and musical comedy stage, and the concert halls provide a stage equipment which is totally inadequate and forces us to give an inferior and distorted performance.

The Opera Houses are booked with their own scheduled performances or, as in the case of the Manhattan, are off the beaten path and too large and expensive to operate.

We believe that the enthusiasm and response that we have met, not only in New York but in over three hundred cities of the United States and Canada, indicate that there is now a public which realizes, understands and loves the art of the dance and will support at least one established institution for the offerings of this art in America.







CHAPTER X THE DREAM



THEATRE of the Dance is the answer to the need of the American dancers today. We have proved with our Denishawn Dancers that by our own earnings we cannot ourselves put this dream into existence, any more than a great violinist could support a symphony orchestra with his concert receipts. But we

have indicated the quality of dance that can be produced by Americans, and have shown to the American public a young plant which has grown so healthy in its small jar that it cries to be set out in a larger field where it can grow to great height and beauty.

Let me then dream this Greater American Dance, and the institution necessary to guide and direct its activities. This organization, in addition to the Theatre of the Dance, would embrace the necessary departments of a training school with dormitories, studios and workshops.

To begin at the beginning, we would want first a country place about two hours from New York, of one hundred to four hundred acres. Here we would take sixty to one hundred children, especially chosen in regard to parentage which would indicate artistic leanings, physical health and beauty, character and intelligence. These children would live at this country school all the year round.

This country place would also be used for creative workers, or research students, who need long periods of quiet, rest and protection. It would also be a place of rest and recreation for those active workers in the school and theatre in New York. One portion of this country estate would be equipped in the manner of a summer camp so that the entire school could be conducted in the country during the hot months. The school would also train teachers of dancing from all over the country, who even now come to us for new material, new inspiration, broadened vision; at the same time the dance training in the open air would give them country life and recuperation.

Getting back to the question of the children, we would give the children their complete academic education, maintaining a staff of carefully chosen teachers and using the best of modern methods in education. The training in the education of children today inclines toward the development of the creative instinct, reverting to the root meaning of the word educate, which is to draw out of the child those latent qualities which are all there in embryo. The so-called academic studies would be correlated to the dance training so that the child would study the history and geography along with the arts and decorations, the music and the dancing of ancient Egypt.

The dance would be developed first as play with almost no formalized technique. Gradually, as the dance-play necessitated a certain type of movement, studies of the principles and laws necessary to produce that movement would logically be entered into, and eventually in connection with the study of that period of history at which the ballet had its rise, there would come all formalized technique of the ballet. Thus, children starting with kindergarten and going through the usual grammar and high school grades would emerge with academic education and a synthetic dance art education complete for that stage of attainment.

Teachers of sculpture, painting and music, instructors in various handicrafts would all be available to encourage and feed that child who showed special aptness for any one of these lines.

In regard to the special dance training, the curriculum would include the universality of the dance. It would be our definite intention and plan to have on the faculty experts and specialists in every type of dancing. We would expect to have native Spanish teachers, native Japanese teachers, both men and women, native East Indian Nautch dancers, each at the head of his profession in his own country, as well as the finest living teachers of the classic European ballet tradition. The general dance education of the student would be under our own guidance, and the time for taking that work and the amount of work with each of the specialists would be prescribed according to the needs and temperament of the individual student.

The life of these children would be made as homelike as possible, living in small units with a house-mother to every five or six children, so that there would be always a personal guidance and loving care over each. The food would be wholesome and simple, prepared under the direction of an expert dietitian. Clothes would be reduced to a minimum, only what was necessary to keep them warm and protect them from the elements. In the warmer weather the children would be as nearly nude as seemed practical. There certainly would be no silk stockings and no French heels. Clothes would be beautiful in color and of material lovely in texture and of flowing line.

There would be contact with New York only at rare intervals and then under chaperonage in order to hear fine music when expressed by masters, occasional trips to the great art museums, and rare visits to the theatre in the case of the performing of such classical drama as might be considered a necessary part of the dancer's education. They would not be taken to see any moving pictures

in the city of New York; those moving pictures considered to be of educational value and a real stimulus, which to date have been painfully scarce, would be projected for them in the school. It is our hope to make moving-picture records of the dancing of all the great dancers living today, and this would be a part of the library of film which would also include photographs of native dances taken all over the world and used for the dancer's education. Also we intend to make analytical moving pictures of movement with the slower-than-nature-method so that the movements in the dance which are very rapid because of the demands of the law of gravity could be displayed slowly for the student. The pictures of native countries and customs would also be used in connection with the academic study of geography. The religious ideas of native peoples would be studied in connection with their dance movement, so as to correlate in a child's mind the fact that quality of thought and quality of movement are always associated.

The dance training would take place out of doors as much of the year as possible. There would be a swimming pool. Also the main indoor studio would be like a temple, so that the same sense of space and dignity and majesty would be obtained there as in the great groves of trees surrounding their outdoor dancing space.

In cases where it was practical and desirable for the mother of the child to come to the school with her son or daughter, there would be a certain group of cottages in which these little families would live.

These children would all be kept away from the hectic, theatrical atmosphere until they were sixteen or seventeen years of age at least. When their academic and dance training have reached a point of sufficient excellence the pupils would then be transferred to the New York school. There would be no children used in the theatre in New York except for occasional matinées, conducted in a most un-

theatrical manner, the children performing those movements and dancing those ideas in keeping with their physical, mental and emotional development. It is the ideal of this country community that life be lived with the same aspiration for poise, symmetry, proportion and beauty that go to make a work of art, and because a life devoid of duties and devoid of responsibility would be weakening for character, a certain amount of work would be required of each pupil for its moral value. Tasks would be assigned calculated to be sufficiently difficult of achievement to work for the building of strength in the dancer's personal make-up.

In New York we would require a large building providing for a whole community under one roof. Dormitories would be needed for the dancers now graduated from the country school, also suitable chaperonage. I find the more sincerely a dancer is an artist in his attitude toward his work, the less he chafes against rules which his intelligence shows him are necessary for the maintainance of an institution whose benefits he is glad to accept. The rules of living in these dormitories would not be rigid or complicated, but they would include complete abstinence from tobacco and alcohol in any form. They would insist upon a certain number of regular hours of sleep; and here again upon simple and natural food, provided by a dietitian capable of keeping an individual record of the physical condition of each dancer and prescribing an individual diet when necessary.

There would be many dance studios, for practice and rehearsal, and most essential of all, creative studios for the creative workers. In the workshops costumes for the theatrical productions would be made, and properties and a small amount of simple scenic painting and construction taken care of. The great culmination of this whole system beginning with the children in the country school and continuing through the departments I have enumerated would, of

course, be a theatre of the dance for the maintenance of a permanent American ballet. This would run for a long season, starting in the early fall and lasting until late spring, with frequent change of bill — big dance themes for the entire evening, and at other times programs made up of several ballets and group divertissements, which is the usual arrangement of dance programs. Each member of this ballet would be required to do ensemble work whenever called upon, with the assurance of being allowed to do solo work as fast as she was capable; also, if her periods in the studio resulted in dance creations of her own, a chance to perform them before the art directors and before the public when of sufficient merit. Futhermore, if anyone of the dancers had an idea or scenario for a big ballet requiring the entire organization, this scenario could be submitted, and, if approved, produced by her with such assistance from our older experience as might seem necessary.

The stage of this theatre would need certain equipment and call for certain proportions that are somewhat different from any existing theatre today. The fore-stage or apron would nearly double the space back of the proscenium arch. Being both painting and sculpture, the dance loses some of its value when performed always within the picture-frame type of stage. After the pictorial background is once established, in many cases the dance would gain by having the dancers come forward on to this large apron, producing a three dimensional aspect not possible in the present ordinary theatre. There would be some form of Fortuny sky, or plaster cyclorama, as a more or less permanent background against which to put symbolic decoration and set pieces.

Moreover, the stage would be so arranged that all the usual equipment of fly galleries would be available for the ballet requiring the old type of stage setting with hanging drops. The light equipment would be of prime importance, as we feel that stage

lighting today is medieval and has not kept pace with the march of progress in other lines.

It is our privilege to be the first dancers to make an experiment with the Clavilux, Mr. Thomas Wilfred's color organ. In addition to having a very elaborate switch-board controlling all necessary varieties of ordinary stage electrical equipment, we also want Mr. Wilfred to build us a specially constructed Clavilux, as the use of mobile color with dance movement is one of the inevitable developments of the dance art. Both the operation of the Clavilux and of the switch-board should allow the electric director (as important and therefore as intelligent a person as the musical director) to see all parts of the stage at all times. The floor of the stage would have to be very smooth and very hard, but made of wood, for yielding quality; and there would be no trap-doors, bolts nor hinges to trip the feet of the unwary dancer.

There would also be available block units so that the stage could be arranged in various levels, as many of our ideas for the future will require dancing on two or three levels in order to produce a visual counterpoint.

The orchestra space would be so designed that the musicians could be heard but not seen, the piano director, however, still able to see the dancers with ease.

Dressing rooms would be large in size, equipped with shower baths and couches for rest between vigorous numbers. The dressing rooms would connect with the dormitories, enabling the dancers to go directly to their rooms without having to dress for the street. A combination of green-room and drawing-room would parallel the auditorium so that a social atmosphere could be maintained between the ballet and its supporters and patrons.

On one of the upper floors there would be a fairly good sized swimming pool, and on half of the roof, a big open studio, to be

used whenever weather permitted, for the sake of the health of the dancers while living in the city. On the other half of the roof a temple-like studio would be erected, for use in inclement weather and for abstract dancing, music visualization, and experiments in silent dances when the background should be completely untheatrical. Here the real devotees of the dance would assemble, audiences interested in its esoteric value and not seeking trappings of costume, make-up and lights to sweeten the movement.

A fine, complete library, the noble beginning of which we have already, would be provided so that the dancer could put in from an hour to two hours a day in literary research. This library would be kept supplied with all works on dancing and music as well as the various other arts, on costuming, on the theatre and on travel.

In the city school there would be training provided for those other students who had not gone through the entire country school years, and there would also be various plans of work and self-support for them. The problem of chaperonage is always an easy one when the students are kept busy, and the filling of spare time would be positively handled, even in the city school.

In the life lived by this art community, even though in New York, there would be an isolation from cheap distraction; the ability to dance beautifully and creatively under ideal conditions would be considered more than compensation for the outside jazz existence which they would have to give up, and any dancer who did not gladly and voluntarily make this sacrifice would not be in this institution for long.

The organization of the dancers themselves would be the Guild of American Creative Dancers, as such an institution as this in such a country as ours could have a vital and progressive and healthful existence only on a democratic and coöperative basis. Later the more experienced dancers would have, of course, greater weight and





influence, but the government of the art life of the American ballet would be a representative form of government.

Mr. George Jean Nathan in a recent issue of the American Mercury makes vehement statements against the Actors' Equity and claims that artists can never organize, that only trades peoples and mechanics can organize. I agree with him that the ideal condition is for each artist to be supremely and independently an individual, but in this day and age the artist individual meets an organized outside world and he is totally unable to cope with the mass formation with which he is confronted. There is only one weapon with which organizations can be successfully met and that is another organization. The actors have had to band themselves together because they saw the theatre being completely controlled by organizations of managers, organizations of agents, organizations of musicians and stage hands. It is the defense which present day civilization has forced upon the artist of the theatre, and he has no choice. The same is true of the dancers. The American dance artists will have to exist as a unit with a unity of ideals and purposes, and meet the world with a solid front in order that the art of the dance may receive its rightful response.

This American ballet would have a sufficient repertoire to tour the big cities of this country and would in the summer time dance with the big symphony orchestras in the various stadiums. Undoubtedly some portion of each year would be spent abroad. Smaller units as offshoots of the great ballet, but under its artistic and executive guidance and control, would make concert tours (one-night stands) of the smaller cities which could not afford to support the big organization but which would get thus the best in quality.

The theatre of the dance, during those times of the year when the American ballet was on tour, would be open to the foreign dancers. A business organization would endeavor to book the great

dancers of the world for performances and also bring foreign ballets over for short seasons. Every assistance would be rendered these guest artists to produce as fine a performance under as ideal conditions as the organization could put at their command.

The business organization would be a Board of Directors made up of the foremost American dancers, supported and advised by business, executive and financial specialists. The property would be owned by a holding corporation and the funds supervised by a Trusteeship. The dancing school would be practically self-supporting through its tuition. The land and buildings of the country place and the city building, including the dormitories, school and theatre, would have to be endowed and owned outright by the dancers' organization. There would also be an endowed fund to maintain at all times a group of children under training. These would be the picked material spoken of before and would be under legal contract to remain with the ballet for a definite period of years. In this way a high grade of performance could be maintained, although the performers in the dance theatre would be chosen from paid pupils as well as from the scholarship pupils. The actual dancers in the theatre would be paid a living wage from the receipts of the theatre, and this wage would be scaled up with the succeeding years of performance and also the development of exceptional solo ability. There would be, of course, no big salaries paid, as the recompense would come in the use of the equipment, the studios in which to create and practice, the use of the ballet for producing one's own ideas, and the theatre for the performance of these creations; and as I pointed out in the last chapter, the dancer who makes a big salary in the commercial theatre today and saves that salary cannot buy these conditions even with money.

The school would also have a teacher's department to train teachers from all over the country, so that the ideals of the central

school would be promulgated in all parts of America; and these teachers would be training young children who could not leave home or who were not chosen as scholarship pupils under the endowment.

The summer school camp on the country place ought to be enormously attended and thus prove a source of revenue. If the theatre makes a profit, which after the first five to ten years is inevitable, this profit would go back into the production fund, enabling still finer and more elaborate ideas to be produced.

Miss Ruth St. Denis and I have seen the art of the dance make great strides forward even during the years of our own careers. We have seen the gradual but steady recognition of the value of dancing to human life and its supreme importance in the world of art. We have given birth to an embryo American ballet, and the encouraging response of the public over our entire country to this organization has indicated that the time is near for the realization of our dream. This plan or its equivalent will inevitably be made a reality within the next ten years. Occasionally we hear rumors of various "American" institutions of art, music and dancing supported by American capital, the entire staff and faculty of which are foreign born. These institutions can never be truly American no matter how frantically they lay claim to the name. We are ourselves not interested in whether this institution be called American or not, but we are interested most decidedly that it really be American. This is in no sense a refusal to allow a place in the sun for activities of any other race or nation, but it is merely claiming a place in the sun for one institution that is purely American.

In laying out the general lines of this plan, I am not speaking merely as a visionary and a dreamer, but I speak with the experience of eleven years as the executive head of a very successful school of dance founded by Miss St. Denis and myself. We have learned

through this experience a great many things not to do and a great many things that we would like to do within enlarged opportunity. We have also organized, financed and maintained the only selfsupporting dance organization which performs for a long season every year and provides for a corps of young American creative dance artists an actual living, year in and year out, without a lowering of their ideals. Therefore, this is not a plea to be freed from any necessary responsibility, and not a plea to be given money to waste. I have been a dancer, a creator, a teacher and an executive business man and financial director of a very sizable, successful organization, but "the destruction of the poor is their poverty." We are convinced that out of our own earnings we can never do more than maintain the approximate size of the ballet which we are maintaining today. This institution once endowed will be self-supporting, will be run on economic and businesslike principles; it will take its place among the great art and educational institutions of the world, and will be a real factor in the advance of civilization and the freeing of the human soul.















